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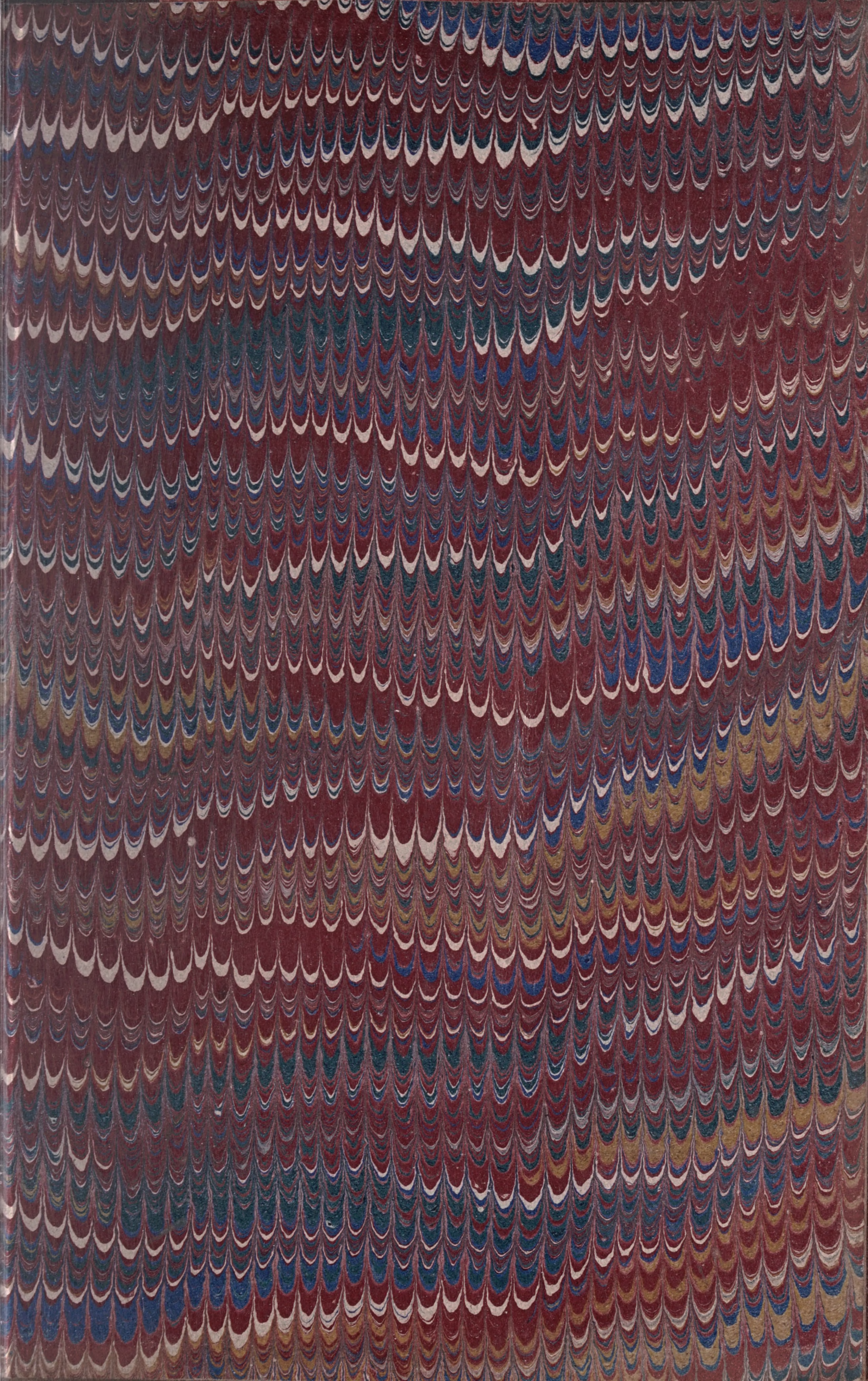
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By EDWARD GARRETT.

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST
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George Munro

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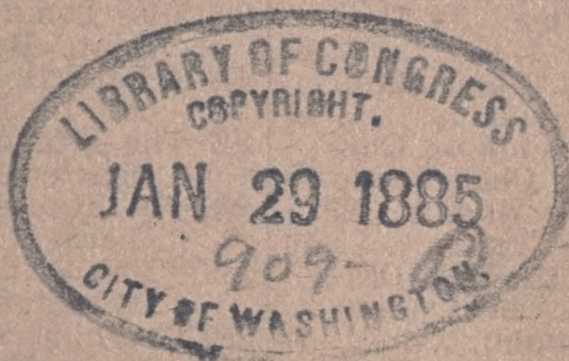
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AT ANY COST.

By EDWARD GARRETT.

*I believe a Bury
"Mayo."*

*No
Sea Side*



NEW YORK:
GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
17 TO 27 VANDEWATER STREET,

(1885)

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AT ANY COST.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER AND SON.

It was a wild December morning. Dwellers in cities splashed through the puddles formed by the heavy rain of the preceding night and fretted against the exasperating wind, which made it a struggle to grasp their garments about them, and a still greater struggle to keep their tempers. Dwellers in quiet country places plodded along the heavy roads and grumbled at the hard conditions of rural existence in such weather. But our story begins with a woman and a lad who were tramping across a rock-bound treeless swamp on the largest of the Shetland Isles, and who neither grumbled nor even said a word about the weather, perhaps because they were too much accustomed to its harsh and inclement moods—perhaps because their hearts were both so full of other things, and that of one, at least, of feelings with which the gloom was more in accord than any sunshine could have been.

The woman was still in the prime of life, scarcely forty years of age, and the tall lad at her side was her eldest child. But Mrs. Sinclair, of Quodda School-house, had long parted from the last bloom of physical youth, and might have been more than ten years older than she really was. She was a small, slight woman of nervous and excitable temperament, and life had been, for her, little more than a long endurance. Toil and hardship had worn her frame, anxieties almost amounting to terrors had whitened her hair, but none of them had conquered her spirit of indomitable cheerfulness. She had early made reckonings with her own heart as to what were its absolute necessities, and had found that, with her, love and the power of loving service far outweighed all privations and struggles, and so had resolutely accepted her full burden of these. Perhaps she had never before felt such a sinking of her soul as she did to-day, for at last change and pain were stealing into the very home and home-ties for which she had wrought and suffered. It was time for Robert, her first-born, to go out and seek his fortunes in the great world. And now the very day of his departure had come.

“But as it is in the course of nature, it must be the will of God,” said the brave little woman to herself; “and if one lets one’s self begin to cry out against that, one never knows where one may end.”

It troubled her sorely that during the recently past days she had not always been able to restrain her tears. For the sight of them vexed Robert, and had caused him to speak to her more than once in sharp words and with a morose manner, which she felt sure

would return upon his heart to sting it with a tender remorse when he should have gone away out of her sight.

She felt thankful that she did not think she should lose command of herself to-day. All the pathetic parting preparations had been completed, and with nothing more but the end full in view, a desperate calmness had settled on her.

"When one's pain is worst, one shows it least. I know that," she decided to herself. "I believe that is the case with Robert. He has been feeling all the time like I feel to-day."

"Now, Robert," she gasped, for they were walking at a considerable speed and the wind nearly took away her breath, "you won't forget always to let us have a letter. You know it is such a long while between our posts, that if none comes by one of them, we shall have a dreadful waiting for the next." Her life had been worn down by constant waitings—waitings for her husband's return from errands of duty and mercy, amid perils of darkness and cliff and wave—waitings for tidings of death among her own people in the far southern mainland. And somehow, too, she had always been the one summoned to share other people's waitings—the vigils of fishers' wives who knew not yet whether they were widows, and who craved for her presence and were consoled by it when they could bear none other. Alike when the worst came, or when fear faded through hope into glad certainty, she could be spared, and then others might come to console or to congratulate. But she had always been the best angel of the waiting hours, whose touch was soft enough for hearts palpitating with uncertainty, and who knew how to steer between that dread that is too like despair, and that hope which seems to tried hearts too much like indifference. Many a night through had she watched in narrow Shetland huts, while the wind tramped over the roof with a sound as of chariots and horses, and the sea roared and growled below like a fierce wild beast seeking his prey. She had known when to speak and when to keep silence; when to murmur a soothing text, and when only to trim the little iron lamp, or to add another peat to the glowing pile; when to kneel down and call out to God with that strange deep trust which we all find lying still and deep at the bottom of our hearts when storms of sorrow or fear are agitating our lives, and when simply and silently to prepare and proffer a cup of tea. But she knew, too, what all this had cost her.

"There's enough waiting in life which no human hand can hinder, Robert," she went on, struggling valiantly for speech, for she did not want to slacken pace, since Robert might need all his time. "I've had my share of that. I can see it was the lesson I needed, for I was of an impatient spirit. And I've certainly not had too much of it, for I can't do it easily yet. But I think it's a lesson we should leave in God's hand, and not one we should set each other. So you'll take care about the letters, Robert?"

"I'll do my best, mother," said the lad. "But I expect I shall be often very busy. If you don't get word of me you may be sure it is all right with me. Somebody else would soon take care to let you know if anything went wrong."

"I'm not so sure of that," she returned. "I've been thinking about that. Do you remember when the poor Norwegian sailor

with his leg broken was carried up to our house from the wreck of the 'Friga'? Well, he wouldn't write home to his mother till he was sure his leg wouldn't have to be cut off. He said she would think no news was good news, and would be spared all trouble about his calamity if she never heard of it till it was over. And I thought so, too, at that time; but somehow now I don't. If I don't hear from you I shall be apt to fancy, 'Something is wrong with Robert; but he and friends are saying that we will think no news is good news,' and that so they won't trouble us till they have good news to send. But, of course, we don't want you to be writing letters home when it is your duty to be doing anything else," she added, with true love's ready alarm and reluctance lest it become a drag and a fetter on the progress of active life; "but a line will not take you long, and it will make me do double the spinning and knitting on the day it comes in."

"Yes, yes, I understand all that," said Robert. "But do you know, mother, I think you ought to go back? I can't bear to see you gasping and struggling against the wind as you are doing, and there is no time to walk more slowly or even to pick our way. You know I said you shouldn't have come out at all," he added in a rather gentler tone.

"Your father could not leave the school," she answered; "and I could not bear that neither of us should put you a bit on your way." ("She'll begin to cry, now," thought the lad, for her voice faltered; but she did not.) "Yet, of course, I must not hinder you. I think I'll leave you at the Moull. I have just a few words to say yet—I won't take long about them. Robert, my boy, I and your father pray that you may prosper with God's blessing, but that you may always keep God's blessing, whether you prosper or not. And you won't forget your sister Olive, will you? She'll have to depend upon herself, just like you, when we're taken, and we'd not grudge parting from her sooner, if we saw it was for her future good. You'll keep watch for opportunities to suggest to us for Olive, won't you, Robbie? You know we are so out of the world down here."

"Of course, I will, mother, if I see any," said the lad, "but it is scarcely likely that such will come my way."

"What we are looking for is always to be seen sooner or later, and those in London are at the heart of everything," observed Mrs. Sinclair. "But here we are at the Moull," she said, stopping short. "Just stand still one moment, Robert—I won't come further." They were at a point where the way wound between a high, mossy hill and a steep cliff. When they parted each would be out of sight of the other in a moment, so that there would be no heart-rending lookings back. She had thought of this.

"Stand still one moment," she repeated. "I think there is something to say yet." She stood with her face toward the sea, gazing out upon its waste of gray waters dashing up against the fortress-like rocks which guarded the low, dank green hills and the little hamlets peeping up among them. Something to say yet! There was a world of yearning love and solicitude seething in her mother's heart, but then such love and solicitude have to be condensed into much the same words as suits more common needs. She felt Rob-

ert give a slight, quick movement beside her; it might be of impatience, it might be of restive pain. It must be ended.

"Robert," she cried, "we shall be always thinking of you; and we do hope you'll always try to believe we did our very best for you. And in time bring us back your own self improved. God help you to be good, Robert. God send you all true happiness. God keep you. God bless you. Good-by, good-by," and then, as she released his hands from her straining clasp and looked up into his face, her love threw a playful thought upon the wealth of its passion, like a rose on the top of a jewel-case as she added, "And give my love to the trees, Robert; and be sure you know them when you see them—"

And so she smiled upon him and turned away, and in a moment the curve of the hill hid them from each other.

She did not stand still; if she had let herself do that she might have been tempted to hurry after him for yet another farewell. She hastened back along the lonely road which she had just trodden in his dear company. She did not lift up her voice and weep in her loneliness. Her imaginative nature had realized this pain too vividly beforehand to be startled by any sudden stabs. Only, though the wind was behind her now, she still felt scarcely able to draw breath. There were lowly houses in sight, where the simple island hospitality would have readily rendered her rest and refreshment, but there are times when Nature's is the only face we can bear to look upon. Besides, hasten how she might, it would be dark before she reached home. The sun, which had not looked frankly from the sky all day, now displayed a lurid light behind the low hills to the west, throwing them into deep purple and violet shadow. She hurried on, for though there was nothing to fear in an island whose guileless population of many thousands scarcely need the presence of a single policeman, and though, of course, Mrs. Sinclair was quite above all belief in the mischievous fairies, the mysterious "tangies," or ghostly ponies, and other grotesque creations of the simple local imagination, yet in the darkness of a moonless night it would not be very pleasant traveling on a way where the driest walking was to be found by jumping from stone to stone in the bed of candid little watercourses that were far more to be trusted than the treacherous moss, which received one's foot only to close over it. At sundown, too, the wind was almost sure to rise. It was well that Mrs. Sinclair was one of those who instinctively avoid all avoidable discomforts as being apt to throw one aside from one's power to serve, and to compel one to be burdensome to others, for she was in that state of mind when the more selfish and reckless are inclined to court outward suffering as a relief from inward agony.

There was scarcely a sharp word which she had ever spoken to Robert, however much for his good, which did not now seem to her to have been a harsh word; and had she not often allowed him to see her disheartened, weary, and ailing, when, by trying just a little harder, she might have made believe to be as bright and well as usual? And had she done Robert justice to the very utmost of her power? The dear father was such an easy man, so ready to let things take their own way, and so sure that everything was for the best. That was his nature, and could not be altered, she thought; and a sweet and sunny nature it was. She only wished her own

was like it, except that it might not do for two such to run together in such a troublesome world. Had they really done their best for Robert? Would he not find himself terribly behindhand when he went among other people who had lived all their lives in the polished places of the world? Perhaps it had been a mere petty pride, an unworthy shrinking from patronage, which had made her withhold the lad from too much frequenting of the houses of the one or two neighboring proprietors; and perhaps Robert would blame her for it some day.

Ah! she knew she did not miss Robert now—not yet—while the grasp of his hand was still warm upon her own, and while his last words were still ringing in her ears. She could almost be glad just now that he was going away from the constant storm and privation—from the dark, monotonous, empty days which she had often felt must be trying both to the boy's temper and moral nature. But how would she bear the summer-time, when the separation would be growing longer and longer, and when she and Olive would take their spinning-wheels, or their knitting, out of doors, and watch the school-boys at foot-ball, but no more Robert among them; and when the fishing fleets would go and come, but there would be no Robert to go down to the boats, and bring in the latest news? How would she bear to see the blue waves dancing in the sunshine, and to know they rolled between her and her boy, between him and all the old life that had been, and could be no more?

And then again her heart reproached her, for she was a woman who sought to walk in the ways of divine wisdom, and the precepts, "Take no thought for the morrow: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," seemed breathed into her ears almost as by an audible voice. No, she would not think of the future. It, and how she would bear it, was God's business and not hers.

Then, with a strange rebound, such as only highly-strung, wrung natures can comprehend, her thoughts went back to the past, to the richly-wooded, bowery Surrey vale, which she had left more than twenty years ago, and had never seen since, and she saw before her, with all the startling clearness and detail of absolute vision, her ancient moss-grown cottage home, with its sweet old-fashioned flower-garden, and the gray tower of the village church among its guardian yews. Surely for one moment a balmy breeze from that vanished past softened the fierce winds of Ultima Thule! Surely she caught a waft from the myrtles which used to stand in a row on the parlor window-sill! Oh, what a magician memory is! Mrs. Sinclair could have thrown herself down in the dark on the rough, wet ground, to cry her heart out in yearning for the homely faces of old neighbors, for the caw of the rooks in the squire's park, and the ringing of the English bells on a Sunday morning.

No, no, no; this would never do. Again the ancient oracle, to which she had never willingly turned a deaf ear, had its bracing word for her about "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Neither the future nor the past must lay violent hands on the present.

Was it tears or rain on her face? Either way, the rain soon washed off the tears, for it began to fall in torrents, soaking even the thick native shawl which she wore pinned about her head, a more

appropriate covering in such a climate than any bonnet or hat could be. It was dark now, and every moment the ground grew wetter and heavier, clogging the weary progress of her poor tired feet.

"I'm glad of the rain," she thought; "it will keep down the wind. Robert won't get wet in the cabin, and it will give him the smoother passage."

The way suddenly broadened into the valley where her journey ended. Here and there a solitary light sent out a spark of human cheer and habitation. She made straight to her own house, daring, now it was in sight, to realize that she was very tired. She lifted the latch. A glow of peat-smelling light and warmth rushed out to welcome her.

"It's well to reach home on such a night," she said cheerily. "And there's father waking up from a pleasant dream! And there's my Olive got the tea all ready for her mother! Won't it be grand when it's Robert himself that we welcome back again? And what a deal he will have to tell us! It's terrible, this going away; but then there could be no coming home without it. And I've been thinking, Olive, we must begin at once to spin some of our finest wool, or even some flax, if there's any still to be had in the island, to make Robert some light socks for the warm summers down south."

One is tempted to wonder sometimes why God makes such as Mrs. Sinclair to live in a world like this, where they seem doomed to the endurance of exquisite agonies which others never feel or even guess at, and so many of which, alas! others could often avert by a word, or even by a look—how much more by action! But let it be remembered that at every point at which pain can be received, there must be an equal capacity for receiving pleasure. And let it be observed that though the quivering nerves of these sensitive natures may only receive pleasure once for ten times that they are thrilled with agony, yet so exquisite is that pleasure, that it seems almost to neutralize their huge disproportion of suffering.

And what would the world be like if all souls were already so tempered?—ready to receive little but pain, yearning to render naught but joy? Would not that be the very kingdom and will of God come upon earth, for which we pray daily, but over which we too seldom ponder?

Let us think of these martyr-souls with a reverent exultation. They are God's best pledge of what He has in store when all hearts—even these—shall be satisfied forevermore.

CHAPTER II.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

AFTER his mother left him, Robert Sinclair plodded steadily on his road. He thought she was a good little woman to let him go at the last with so little fuss.

Very likely he would not have to walk alone far. One other young Shetlander, at least, was also to sail in the same ship which would take Robert away from the island. Robert was almost sure to overtake Tom Ollison presently, or at any rate to meet him at the

half-way house, where travelers were wont to break their journey by a brief rest beside the fire, and a temperate meal of strong tea and home-baked bread.

If Robert's way onward was somewhat less picturesque than his mother's homeward one, it was also less lonely, that part of the country nearer its little capital being more populous than its remoter regions. Robert Sinclair quickened his pace, when he came in sight of a beautiful little bay, with many houses nestling among its cliffs, and a tiny church and a big manse standing on the lip of the sea. One more up-hill tug, and he would reach his temporary resting-place.

He found the good woman of the little house bustling about in a state of unwonted excitement. If Tom Ollison had not yet arrived, and Robert's inquiries ascertained that he had not, she had other guests of much greater importance in her eyes. Not that she might not have preferred Tom, for she had all the old-fashioned island distrust of strange faces. But then strangers always meant money, ready money, and that is no small boon in a place where life rubs on mostly by a series of exchanges, of doubtfully ascertained values.

Robert found no less than three people already awaiting the hostess's ministrations. But they were not all together—one sat alone and apart, quite extinguished by the presence of the others. He recognized this one, and she got up and courtesied to him because she knew he was the schoolmaster's son at Quodda. This was little Kirsty Mail. He thought now that he had heard his mother say something about Kirsty's soon going to a servant's place in the south; but his mother was always taking so much interest in these kind of people and things, that he could not be expected to remember all the details.

The other two were strangers, perfect strangers. Robert was sure of that the moment he saw them. They were seated in front of the open fire, spreading out their garments to dry in its genial heat. They both turned and looked at him; but they made no room for him at the fire, any more than they evidently had done for Kirsty Mail; probably it did not occur to them that anybody was traveling but themselves. The one was a big burly gentleman with a face that would have been fine, but that its once noble outlines were blurred by too much flesh. It was the same with its expression. It was odd how so much good-humor and kindness could remain apparent among such palpable traces of peevishness, irritability, and something very like discontent. His long olive-green overcoat was richly furred about the neck and wrists, and there was a magnificent signet-ring on the hand he held out over the glowing fire.

The other was quite a young girl, and it was almost ridiculous to see the features of the father's heavy, rather voluptuous countenance translated into her delicate beauty. But it was not everybody who could have eyes to see that his expression was also translated into hers, and still fewer, that it did not even gain by the transfer. Young vices go under such euphonious names: they are called "sweet petulance" and "airy scorn," and "innocent thoughtlessness." Alas! It is so often only when it is too late, when they have taken firm hold on the life and have ravaged it, and spread poison around it, that they are recognized for what they are!

"I hope that good woman won't be long in giving us something to eat, Etta," said the gentleman to the young lady. "I'd like to be into the town before dusk if possible; but I suppose it isn't. There's no knowing what the way may be like. What did she say she could let us have, eh?"

"She said something about eggs," answered the girl indifferently.

"And tea, eh?" added the gentleman, with a disgusted tone. At that moment Mrs. Yunson bustled into the apartment to spread a clean coarse cloth on the rough table. So he directed his inquiries to her.

"You don't mean to say you can't let me have anything stronger than that," he said, as she set forth a dim tin tea-kettle.

"It's real good, sir," she answered. "Tea's a thing that keeps well, and we can get that good."

"But I want some brandy—or at any rate some beer," he said.

"This isn't a licensed house, sir," said Mrs. Yunson. "There is not one nearer than Lerwick; there are very good ones there."

"Well, I don't know how you get on in such a climate without something to comfort you," observed the visitor. "But I dare say you know how to take care of yourselves. There are nice little places among the rocks, where nice little boats can leave nice little kegs, eh? And, upon my word, I don't see who could blame you. The revenue folk oughtn't to be hard on people living in such a place."

"Indeed, and that's very true, sir," responded Mrs. Yunson, going on with her hospitable duties.

"I suppose you really do have a good deal of smuggling here?" inquired the guest, lowering his voice to a more confidential tone.

Mrs. Yunson shook her head. "Not now, sir," she answered demurely. "There's a little tobacco, maybe, now and again, but not enough to be worth the trouble and risk. It is done more for the fun of the thing, than anything else, I do believe. The cloth is quite fresh and clean, miss," she interpolated, seeing the young lady's eye fixed with suspicious disfavor on sundry pale stains upon it. "Those marks are just off the hay-stack, on which it was dried. That's the only way we can manage in winter—the ground is that soft and dirty, and the wind's too high for lines."

Miss Etta Brander began to sip her tea. She said nothing about its quality, which was really excellent, but she remarked that she could not touch the bread—she would rather starve—it was so lumpy.

"Well, Etta," growled her father, "I should really think you could put up for once without grumbling with what other people have to live upon all their days."

Etta smiled superciliously; she knew she owed the reproof only to her father's own irritation at having to go without his usual mid-day indulgence of a "tot" of brandy.

Mrs. Yunson asked if they had done with the tea-pot, that she might take it away to supply the wants of Robert and little Kirsty Mail.

Etta looked calmly at her, as if she either did not hear or did not understand what she said. But her father answered, "Certainly,

certainly. Why did you not ask for it before? I did not know they were travelers too. I thought they were your own boy and girl."

Robert's cheeks flamed. To think of anybody's mistaking him for a son of old Bawby Yunson's! And yet was it to be wondered at, he admitted, thinking of his own rude and travel-stained appearance, and reflecting that people so accustomed to wealth and luxury as those before him, were little likely to observe those subtle marks of different rank which had hitherto been very visible to his own eyes. As for little Kirsty Mail, she was all in crimson confusion to think that anybody could imagine her a sister of young Mr. Robert Sinclair; how angry it would make him—such a smart young gentleman as he was!

Mrs. Yunson made sundry strategic movements by which she contrived to suggest that even these humbler guests must have some share of the drying warmth of the fire, before they could be suffered to depart. The gentleman pushed back his chair and made room for Kirsty.

"And where do you come from? And how did you get here?" he asked, looking at her, with a smiling, half-contemptuous curiosity, which is some people's form of interest in an odd sort of animal.

"I came most of the way in a cart, sir," faltered the blushing Kirsty. "I come from Scantness."

"And are you going to Lerwick? How are you going to get there?"

"Walking, please, sir," said Kirsty, open-eyed, wondering what doubt there could be on that matter.

"It's pretty rough work for such as you," said the stranger.

"Oh, they are used to it, pa," remarked Miss Etta. "Habit is everything in these matters."

"And what are you going to do after you get to Lerwick?" Mr. Brander went on, as if nature had given him the right to ask all these questions because he was clad in broadcloth and sealskin, while Kirsty wore only coarse tweeds.

"I'm going to my aunt's in Edinburgh—I'm to stay with her until I get a place," answered Kirsty meekly.

"Oh, you're off in the ship too, are you? And is not there anybody from home to see you off?"

"No, sir," faltered Kirsty, "there's only grannie at home, and she's almost stone-blind."

"It's a wonder she did not want you to stay with her: how will she get on without you?"

"She lives with a woman who looks after her," answered Kirsty.

"And how does she live? I mean what supports her? The parish, I suppose—I'm told it's getting quite the natural support of old ladies in Shetland," observed Mr. Brander.

"Grannie gets money from my uncle in Inverness," said Kirsty simply.

"Oh," said Mr. Brander, "that's very dutiful of him. I suppose he's pretty well off?"

"He's a journeyman baker, sir," answered Kirsty. "He sends her three shillings a week regularly."

"And is that all she has?"

"She does a good deal of spinning and knitting yet, sir—almost as well as if she could see," replied Kirsty, who was loyally proud of her grandmother in this respect.

"And does she make much by that?"

Kirsty was dubious, and hesitated.

"I mean, how much can she earn in a week?" he said, impatiently varying the form of his question.

"Indeed, sir, and I cannot tell that," said Kirsty, blushing as if she deserved that he should scold her.

"They don't do it in that way, sir," interposed Mrs. Yunson. "Most of them just do what they can, and take it to the merchant's, an' he gives them what he can afford of the things they are wantin'. I dare say your grannie will make out her tea and her meal yet that way—the little she wants—" she added, turning to Kirsty.

"Indeed, an' she does," said Kirsty, greatly relieved.

"A very little goes a long way here, I imagine," observed Miss Henrietta Brander. Little did she dream that in her slighting words she had given a succinct description of true affluence!

"But you don't mean to tell me that those outlandish old things are still in actual use?" cried Mr. Brander, pointing to a spinning-wheel which stood in a corner of the room.

"Indeed, and it is so, sir," answered Mrs. Yunson. "I doubt if there's a house in Shetland without one. We know all about our wool from the time it's off the sheeps' backs till it's on our own. We couldn't bear your manufactured things, sir; they would not serve our turn at all. There's nothing but Shetland wool will keep out Shetland weather."

Mr. Brander lifted a corner of the shawl which Kirsty Mail was wearing, and felt it gently between his fingers.

"You would be satisfied with fewer fal-de-rals, Etta," said he, "if you had to make them up from the beginning, instead of running about to shops and dressmakers!"

Etta tossed her head. It was really too odious and too ridiculous that he should draw such comparisons. But then papa was always aggravating when he had not had his brandy.

"And aren't you frightened to be going among such strange places and people?" pursued Mr. Brander, still addressing Kirsty. "How will you manage all your little business? Haven't you any luggage? Where is it?"

"Grierson's cart took up my box this morning, sir," said Kirsty. "He had to go into Lerwick with some geese to sell for Christmas time. And Tom Ollison will see me safe on board ship, and off again to meet my aunt at Leith."

"Tom Ollison!" echoed Mr. Brander, with an inquiring look at Robert Sinclair. And before Kirsty could stammer out that this was not he, a merry young voice cried from the threshold:

"Who wants him? Here he is! Haven't I run the last bit of the way, I was so afraid I should miss you! There's so many people to say good-by to, and they have all something extra to say." •

The speaker was vigorously rubbing his feet on the home-made straw mat in the entry. Mr. Brander watched, amused. Even Miss Henrietta gave her supercilious smile. When Tom Ollison

came forward, and found whom he had been addressing so uncere-
moniously, the swift color rushed to the very roots of his waving
golden hair, but he only looked frankly into the unknown faces and
smiled.

"I did not expect anybody was here but Kirsty and you, Rob,"
he said, with implied apology.

"I expect you will have to be quick over your eatables, young
man," remarked Mr. Brander, with a smile, "or you and this fair
damsel will be terribly belated."

"We'll be in plenty of time for the boat, sir," answered Tom;
"thank you, sir, thank you," as Mr. Brander pushed the homely
viands toward him. "And everybody is quite safe here at any
time. There's nobody to be met but those willing to do one a good
turn."

"Ah, I suppose so," said Mr. Brander, half interrogatively. "I
am told you hardly lock your doors at night hereabouts. Wonder-
ful that seems to us, accustomed to cities like London and Glasgow.
What is that you are saying, Etta?"

"That the houses do not look as if they held much worth steal-
ing," she said listlessly. "I can scarcely tell which are dwelling-
houses and which are what our driver called lamb-houses!"

"You see we are all pretty much alike in Shetland, sir," observed
Tom Ollison, in his pleasant, frank manner.

"We might well be all a little better off," sighed Mrs. Yunson.

"At any rate, nobody ever starves here," said Tom Ollison, "and
that's more than can be said for those places where there is plenty
to steal in some houses. It's not what is in our houses, but the
houses themselves, which might be a little changed for the better.
I'm glad the young lady has noticed how bad they are."

Somehow, there was an awkwardness in the pause which fol-
lowed.

"I suppose the horse has had its feed by this time," said Mr.
Brander, rising. "Is the chaise ready?"

"It's standing at the door," answered Mrs. Yunson, bustling for-
ward to proffer her assistance to Miss Etta with her wraps. "You
must put on everything you can, young lady," she advised, "for I
think there is going to be more rain."

"Heugh!" said the young lady, sniffing at the quilted hood, with
which she enveloped her sealskin-capped head, till little was visible
of her face except her eyes—"Heugh! how soon everything gets a
smell of that horrid peat!"

"We think it fine and healthy, ma'am," observed Mrs. Yunson.
"The fish o' the sea an' the peat i' the hills are the blessings God
gives to Shetland."

Robert Sinclair had already gone outside. He wanted to have a
look at "the chaise"—perhaps to put a few questions to its driver.
Tom Ollison sauntered after him, and then Kirsty Mail stole out,
not caring to be left alone with the "gentry."

Robert turned to young Ollison as he joined him, and drew him a
little aside.

"Why!—do you know who those are?" he whispered.

"Ay, that I do," said Tom, with a smile. "That's Mr. Brander,

the London stock-broker, who has just got hold of Wallness and St. Ola's Isle."

"Ought you to have said anything to him about the houses?" asked Robert.

It was notorious that those on the Wallness estate were among the worst in the island.

"To whom ought one to speak about them if not to the landlords? Ought we to only talk of their business behind their backs?" returned Tom; "and I did not bring in the subject, neck and heels; the young lady led up to it. And as he has just got hold of the property he's not to blame for its condition yet—not yet! I thought I was in the nick of time."

The Branders came out of the cottage. Etta was assisted into the seat beside the driver, for her father did not venture to take the control of a strange horse on unknown roads. Etta made considerable demands on both him and the driver in the way of tucking her into her rugs, and securing them about her. At last she pronounced herself "as comfortable as she could be in that miserable climate," and her father was free to clamber rather painfully into the back seat of the vehicle, which had scarcely been built for people of his weight and proportions. His native good-humor revived as he looked forward to a more stimulating meal at the snug hotel in the town.

"I think we have room for another—a light one," he said, looking at Tom Ollison, who had somehow piqued and interested him. "Will you have a lift?"

"Thank you very much, I'm sure, sir," said Tom brightly. "But I've promised to look after Kirsty, and I've to look in at one or two houses with messages, and I've got to carry this to Lerwick," and he poised in his hand a strange strong basket made of closely bound straw.

"What in the name of wonder are you doing with that? It's empty, isn't it?" asked Mr. Brander.

"It's a Christmas present from our farm lad to his sister, who is married, in Lerwick. It is to hold her peats. It is what we call a cashie," explained Tom. "The men make them in the winter evenings."

"Well, as you've neither got a damsel to escort, nor a hamper to carry," said Mr. Brander, turning to Robert Sinclair, "perhaps you will be glad of a lift? If so, up you get."

"Thank you very much, sir," answered Robert, instantly accepting the invitation. What a queer fellow Tom was! Kirsty must have come on safely enough without him; for that matter, Robert himself would have had to walk with her then. And Tom could have left the cashie at Mrs. Yunson's for somebody else to take up at their leisure—the servant-lad would have easily inferred that it had been accidentally forgotten. However, Robert felt that he had little reason to criticise Tom's "queerness," since in this instance it had given him an opportunity he must otherwise have missed.

"Well," said Kirsty, as she and Tom set off on their march, after the chaise had rapidly driven away, "I should not think anybody with all those beautiful wraps need grumble at any weather."

"Don't you think so, Kirsty?" said Tom. "I rather do. I think

the wrapping up is the bother of it, for any of us. I should not like to be a fish if I had to put on water-proof."

"Who is that young fellow we have left behind us?" asked Mr. Brander of Robert, as Tom and Kirsty waned small in the distance while the chaise rattled away.

"Tom Ollison, sir," Robert answered. "He is the son of the farmer at Clegga, out Scantness way."

"A fine young fellow, if he only has good guiding and gets into the right way," mused Mr. Brander aloud, revealing the purport of his words by adding, "He ought to make a fortune with that head of his and that taking manner. But it's odd how those don't always tell best in that direction. I shouldn't wonder, now," he went on, with a keen glance at his companion, "if you come back the richer man of the two."

Robert smiled demurely at the dubious half compliment. "Tom was always cleverer than I was," he said. "I've always known him: he went to my father's school."

"And you're not going to follow your father's profession? You're wise. Plenty of work for very little money there—not a penny turned over without drudgery in it. Just work, work, work, till a man is worn out. I say that a man should make his fortune soon enough to enjoy himself while he's able to do so."

There was that in Mr. Brander's manner which added as plainly as in words, "as I have done." Still Mr. Brander did not look a perfect picture of enjoyment. He was scanning the features of the country through which they were passing.

"Some of the houses are a little more like what one is accustomed to hereabout," he observed. "These all have some sort of window, and mostly chimney-pots. About Wallness I noticed many with apertures in the roof for a light, and a hole for the escape of smoke."

"I've heard it said that those are most comfortable after all, for this climate," remarked Robert.

"Well, perhaps so. Ha! I shouldn't wonder—warm in winter and shady in summer," assented Mr. Brander with a sense of relief. "Only when one sees them one's natural feeling is that one wouldn't like to live in them one's self."

"The people are accustomed to them," said Robert; "it is quite a different thing. They have no idea of anything else."

"And it's really folly to interfere with the habits of a community," remarked Mr. Brander. "I believe in keeping in old fashions. The world would be a ridiculous place if it was not for variety."

He began to think that after all he had not made such a bad bargain in acquiring the estate of Wallness. Certainly, he would never have chosen it; it was not in his line at all. He had hitherto taken his holiday pleasure on plans gradually ascending with his fortunes, from Margate and Brighton to Scarborough and Homburg; he had stayed at the lakes once, and had been horribly bored, though he always owned that the cooking was good. But Wallness and the island of St. Ola had "come in his way," as he would have termed it, or he "had got hold of them," as Tom Ollison had expressed it, because, being an unentailed property, the last of their ancient owners had used them as security in sundry speculative proceedings, by which he had wildly hoped to realize some wealth where-

with to enrich himself, and do some justice to his barren and ill-drained acres, a proceeding which, of course, had ended as it always does. It had struck Mr. Brander that it did not sound bad to be the owner of an island, and to talk of "his little place, Wallness Castle." At any rate he would keep them for a little while; they had come into his possession at a time when he could not hope to gain much by selling the pledge he had taken of his neighbor, and it occurred to him that their value might be increased by a little judicious application of the business principles which he had found to answer so well in his set in the city. He had been a little confounded by the utter novelty of all he had found at Wallness. He had mistrusted the late laird's factor, had shrunk from the minister, and altogether had been inclined eagerly to seize an opportunity of insight into the workings of the native mind, which he shrewdly felt he was likely to get from either of the unsophisticated island lads whom chance had thrown in his way. Young Ollison had startled him by touching the already uneasy nerve of his conscience. Robert had furnished him with exactly the arguments and points of view which had been needed to soothe it. He felt confirmed in his first opinion, that of the two this was the lad which would get on in the world.

CHAPTER III.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE'S DIFFERENT WAYS.

THE black darkness of night overtook Tom Ollison and Kirsty long before the changeful beacon-light of Bressay cheered them with the thought that Lerwick was nigh at hand.

Tom had to make a little digression from his direct path to visit a primitive village, that he might say "good by" to one or two "old folks" who had once worked on his father's "place." And as it was from this village that the Lerwick people got most of their peats, it also occurred to Tom that "it was ill carrying in an empty cashie," when he might spare somebody one journey by filling it at once. His father had intrusted him with one or two silver coins as "New Year tokens" for these ancient dependents, and somehow, when Tom thought how their hardworking lives were fast closing in, while his was beginning in youth and health and hope, and how their grand old faces might very likely be at rest under the rough turf of the bleak churchyard before he could come back, he felt he should like to give them a little pleasure now, while they were within his reach, and so he supplemented his father's gifts with all the munificence of youthful sensibility. The old folks received his kindness with the dignity of their years, with almost as little show of emotion as might be displayed by stone deities when offerings are laid at their shrine. But when he was gone, slinging the now weighted cashie over his strong young shoulders, one old dame said to her ancient neighbor that, "the Ollisons had always the open hand; it ran in the race; not the ill-closed-together fingers that let the money slip through, but the thumb that bends far back, and kens how to give." And the veteran had answered sternly, "that he knew naught o' such auld wife's sayings, but he reckoned the world wad be none the poorer if such as Tam Ollison were rich."

Tom had full license for his liberality, for as the youngest son of a widower—well-to-do, according to island estimates, and already relieved from all charge of his elder children—the lad had started from home with a fairly liberal allowance for his journey in his pocket, and without any strait injunctions as to how these should be applied. “Do what you feel is best under the circumstances which arise, Tom,” old Mr. Ollison had said. “Think what is right and fair, that’s the best advice I can give you, my boy, because I can’t foresee every turn, and this will fit them all.”

At last the crowded lights of Lerwick itself brightened on the view of the young travelers, but not before the staggering steps and roys-tering shouts of sundry wayfarers they encountered had announced that they were in the vicinity of that stage of civilization of which “licensed houses” form an important item.

Tom had promised Kirsty’s grandmother to take her to the Clegga farm-servant’s married sister, where the girl could get rested and refreshed and await the boat that would take them off to the ship. Kirsty had never been in “a town” before, and was awed and mystified as he followed Tom through the steep, narrow lanes. She started and exclaimed at what at first seemed to her in the darkness to be a gaunt arm stretched over a low wall in Chromate Lane. It was but the stumpy bare bough of a stunted tree. But when they arrived at their destination, and she was welcomed by faces which she had known in Scantness, her spirits revived, and she once more found the tongue which she seemed to have lost during the latter part of the journey.

There was nothing for Tom but to stay where he was, in the meanwhile, and partake of the homely viands which were eagerly set before him. He was not the less welcome because he found he had come to a house full of trouble. The young husband, Peter Laursen, had met with a serious accident which had thrown him out of work, and would keep him idle for some time, besides probably entailing a difficult surgical operation, which would have to be performed amid all the disadvantages of a small, dark, ill-ventilated room, the sole dwelling of the young pair, their baby, and an old relation, there being no hospital in the town, nor indeed in the island, for the reception of such sufferers. The young wife, too, was ailing, though there was little wrong with her except the exhaustion due to her strange accumulation of incompatible duties as house-mother, bread-winner, and nurse. Her face looked worn and weary even amid the delight of welcoming her brother’s master’s son, and pouring out upon him a flood of deprecating thanks for his trouble in carrying over the “cashie” which her brother had been so “mindful” as to send, and still more for his thoughtfulness in filling it by the way, and so saving her one toilsome walk to the Hill of Sound. “They may call the hill the poor folk’s doctor,” said she with her pale smile. “An’ I’ll not say it’s not wholesome for us, taking us out from over-much sitting wi’ our pins and our wheels. But one may have too much o’ a good thing, and I think whiles it’s like the rest o’ the doctors, and sometimes kills instead of cures.”

The ship did not sail till midnight, and after Tom and Kirsty had had their tea, the youth proposed going down into the main street to

ascertain when a boat would start to take them on board. He thought, too, that he might come across Robert Sinclair and join forces with him. Kirsty timidly asked if she might accompany him. "She'd be feared to go alone, and she'd like to see the shops." Tom readily assented. He knew Lerwick very well, and was not wholly unfamiliar with larger towns, having paid short visits to Kirkwall, Inverness, and even Aberdeen, though London, the goal of his present journey, with its seething millions, and its sharp contrasts of glory and gloom, still loomed shadowy on his imagination. He thought it would be great fun to hear Kirsty's admiring ejaculations before the first fine edge of her new experiences should be worn away!

Kirsty hung before the windows of the grocer and the baker, just as fine ladies do before those of the mercer and the milliner. She had scarcely realized that there were so many jam-pots and tea-boxes and short-cakes to be seen together anywhere in the wide world! As for the draper's, the fancy shops, and the bookseller's, they fairly struck her dumb. Point d'Alençon and gems from Golconda could not have impressed her more than did those ruffles of cheap lace and strings of imitation beads. But Tom resisted a rising inclination to indulge himself by making her the supremely happy possessor of one or two of these gewgaws. For he said to himself that they would be of no use to her; they were not so fine as they seemed to her, and Kirsty must get into the habit of seeing such things without thinking of getting them. This was wisdom which he had learned for himself, at the cost of sundry thoughtless little purchases when shops had been as novel to him as they were to Kirsty. But it was another matter when Kirsty lingered opposite the bookseller's, admiring a simple little framed print of an old woman at her spinning-wheel, which seemed to her tear-filling eyes a very portrait of "grannie." Tom darted in, and bought the pretty trifle, and placed it in the girl's hand, telling her it would do to hang in her bedroom wherever she went, to keep her in remembrance of Shetland, home and grannie! And then he stopped her, bewildered thanks by taking her into his confidence as to what he should buy for their poor sick host and his weary young wife.

"It shall go into their place after we've left," he decided; "the sight of us from the old home has cheered them up a bit, and after we've gone again, they will feel a little downhearted, and it will do them the more good. Do you think they would like a goose, Kirsty?"

"Deed and I do," said the girl, "but, Master Tom, it will cost a lot o' money in the town."

"I can manage that," answered Tom, who had been looking through his purse, and going over some rapid mental calculations which he did not expound to Kirsty. "And a few oranges will be nice for the sick man; he can take one when his wife isn't at home to give him tea—there's more fruit in Lerwick just now than there is generally, because Christmas is so near. And don't you think it would be a good idea to send one of those little short-cakes with 'A Happy New Year' printed on it in sugar plums? That will give a sort of good grace to all the rest, won't it, Kirsty?"

His rapid suggestions, which seemed so sumptuous in her eyes, nearly took Kirsty's breath away, but she got into the spirit of the

thing, and made a shrewd market of the goose, and a good selection among the short-cake. Oranges she did not know so much about, having only tasted two or three in her life, so Tom gave her one or two to put in her pocket for the voyage. He got all his commodities gathered in the grocer's shop, whose kindly master seemed quite to enter into the situation, and promised that the parcel should be sent faithfully to the address which Tom wrote on the outside of an envelope, on whose inside he put, "This is something to cook over the peats out of the new cashie, with Tom Ollison's love."

They walked the whole tortuous length of the queer chief street, and ascertained that they could have a share of a boat which was to take some people from the principal hotel to the ship. As they had seen nothing of Robert Sinclair, it occurred to Tom to ask the waiter if he knew who these people were, and the answer he got was that the gentleman was "the new man that had got Wallness and St. Ola's, and a young lady, and a young gentleman." This last, Tom decided, must mean Robert himself, as Robert had not been to Lerwick for a long time, and was not likely to be known to anybody there.

The boat was to start within an hour, and they would just have time to go back to the Laurensens to bid them good-by. They were both a little mysterious over their secret, so that Mrs. Laurensen said to her husband that she wondered what that girl Kirsty was giggling at, and she hoped that Mr. Tom had had things as he liked them, for he seemed rather quiet like. But half an hour later Peter and his wife understood all about it! And Mrs. Laurensen said,

"Now, Peter, that's the sort o' folk that ought to be rich."

And Peter replied with a quiet chuckle, "Giving away as you go along isn't the way to get rich, Kate. Leastways, if riches means lots o' money."

When Kirsty and Tom reached the boat, they found they had not been mistaken about Robert Sinclair. He was with Mr. Brander and Miss Henrietta. And as they sat in the little vessel, rocking in the darkness, while Mr. Brander fussed about his luggage, Robert left the young lady and came to their end of the boat to whisper that he had been invited to join them at their hotel dinner, and that Mr. Brander seemed to make sure that he would travel in their part of the boat, and that he really thought he might do so, seeing that their hospitality had already spared his cash a little. It was really a great thing to get a chance of being friendly with such people. He hadn't originally meant to travel first-class, he had half hoped to get Tom to join him in the humbler part of the ship (he said this, rightly guessing that Tom's allowance and marching orders would permit him to do what he liked either way). It would not be a very great extravagance, for the Branders, though they lived in London, were to stop in Edinburgh, where they would remain till after the new year came in, and after they were gone, Robert could resume his original plan.

"I'm going to travel in the steerage," said Tom, rather dryly. For this was the economy on which he had resolved to straighten his accounts after his little beneficences.

"Are you doing this out of sheer contradiction, Tom?" asked Robert, feeling somehow nettled.

"No," replied Tom, more frankly. "I made up my mind about it while I was in the town."

"Mr. Brander has given me his card with his London address on it already," confided Robert. "He asked me to call on him. I'm sure he would ask you, too. I think he took a fancy to you, little as he saw of you," he added, trying to defend himself, to himself, against a secret consciousness that he was not altogether sorry that Tom was behaving as "queerly" as usual. "Are you sure you've made up your mind, Ollison?"

"Quite sure," said Tom, moving a little aside, as at that moment Mr. Brander stepped heavily into the boat, making it sway from side to side, and causing the unaccustomed Kirsty to grasp Tom's arm in terror.

"I'm glad you're to be in the steerage, too, I've been hoping so all the while, but I didn't say so, because I did not think it likely," she whispered. "Now if there's a storm, I'll know you're not far off. You wouldn't forget me?" she pleaded.

Tom laughed. "Of course, I wouldn't," he said; "but I don't think there will be any storm to-night."

The boat began to move off toward the ship, and Kirsty suddenly realizing that the waste of waters had already begun to roll between her and home and grannie, began to cry quietly.

"And so you two are starting out to make your fortunes," said the sonorous voice of Mr. Brander. He meant the two youths, for he never would have thought of such as Kirsty in such a connection.

"I hope we shall do so, sir," said Robert Sinclair.

"It should not be a matter of hope, but of will, young man," rejoined the senior. "If a man means to get on, he has only got to say, 'I will get on at any cost,' and then he does get on. That's what I said when I left home. I left a poorer home than either of yours, I reckon. And I've not done so badly, and I've not done yet."

Even as he spoke his face looked a little sour in the moonlight. For two thoughts rose in his mind and troubled him. First, that his earliest business connection chose to consider him a dishonorable man, and always said so, and that though he denied the justice of the opinion, or at least always talked about "charity" when he heard of it, he could not deny the facts on which it was based. Second, that his own boyish ambition had been to buy "the Hall" of his own native village, and that by some freak of circumstances, just before he became possessed of means so to do, it had been purchased by the trustees of a great charitable association, and converted by them into an idiot asylum, whose poor patients wandered aimlessly in the sweet parterres which were to him as Naboth's vineyard was to King Ahab.

But while Robert Sinclair repeated to himself Mr. Brander's asseveration, and only hoped that it might be true in his, Robert's own case, Tom Ollison had scarcely heard it; Tom stood up in the darkness, with his head bared to the silent stars, and in his blue eyes there was a strange moisture which melted down the lights of Lerwick town into one luminous cloud. Kirsty Mail looked up at him, awed. Was he praying? she thought. He was, though he scarcely knew it himself. But perhaps no prayer goes so straight to

God as the wordless aspiration after His will, the blindfold dedication thereto of one's secret self and one's unknown future.

CHAPTER IV.

A PEEP INTO THE WORLD'S WAYS.

THE voyage to Edinburgh was got over—as such voyages are in the lives of those to whom they are adventurous novelties—with mingled raptures and qualms, with expressions of delight in “a life on the ocean wave,” sinking into inward resolves that if one ever gets safely to land, one will never set foot on a ship again, unless, indeed, it might be to return whence one came, never more to depart thence. Such resolves, however, are generally quite forgotten within an hour after landing. For our memory always colors a sea-voyage with the glowing pleasure of its close—the arrival, as the Psalmist expresses it, “at the haven where we would be.”

Mrs. Brander, who had remained with friends in Edinburgh while her husband and daughter made their trip to Ultima Thule, was down at the docks, awaiting them in her carriage. Mrs. Mail, Kirsty's aunt, was there also, standing close beside the carriage. Mrs. Brander had been speaking to her, and after Mr. Brander had exchanged a few words with his wife, Mrs. Brander called Mrs. Mail again, and with an eye critically fixed on Kirsty, told the aunt that it had just occurred to her that if, in a day or two, she and her niece came up to where Mrs. Brander was staying, she might—Mrs. Brander could not promise she would—but she might—receive a proposal which would be most advantageous to her. Then the Brander carriage drove away, Mr. Brander shouting back to Robert Sinclair, “Shall be in London next week—and mind you don't forget me—but I sha'n't let you.”

“Why, aunt, do you know that lady?” whispered Kirsty, so overcome by the plumes on Mrs. Brander's bonnet and the gold bracelet on the wrist visible at the carriage door that she did not notice her hard tones nor the absence of kindness in her words.

“I go charing sometimes for the family the lady is visiting,” answered the aunt, “so she knew my face, Kirsty, and when she saw me at the docks to-day she called me, thinking I might have been sent after her with some message. Then I told her I was expecting of a young niece a-looking for a place. It would be the making of you if you got employed by that kind of people, Kirsty.” Mrs. Mail was meanwhile making suggestions of courtesies toward Robert Sinclair, who appeared in her eyes as one traveling with Mr. Brander's party—perhaps even of his family—for the carriage had gone off so laden with luggage that it was quite likely that any youth—even though a son—should have been left to follow on foot. Mrs. Mail did not heed Tom Ollison.

“Where are your things, Kirsty?” she asked. “I reckon you'll not have more than you can carry.”

Kirsty had a strong, heavy box and a basket. She and her aunt might just manage to carry these between them, but they would certainly require all their strength.

"Well, I suppose we'll part from you here, Kirsty," said Robert Sinclair. "We are going straight to the railway station, and Mr. Brander said we should only just have time to get some refreshment before the London train starts. So good-by, Kirsty, and I hope you'll get a good place and do well."

He did not shake hands with Kirsty. He had just shaken hands with Henrietta Brander, and somehow it began to seem to him not quite natural to offer the same salutation to both. Tom Ollison held out his hand to the girl, and then paused, to ask Mrs. Mail:

"But which way are you going? Does your road lie toward the station?"

"Yes," she said, "it do; an' it's a good step. I reckon this box will take a day's work out of me."

"I'll give you a hand," answered Tom, "as our ways are the same. The weight's nothing to me."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Mail, quite composedly. "I like to see a young man make himself handy."

"What has become of your own luggage?" Kirsty asked.

"Mine and his," answered Tom, nodding toward Robert, "and a lot of goods of all sorts are being taken on a cart straight from the ship to the train."

Robert Sinclair looked round, saw what had come to pass, and walked on several paces ahead. Kirsty followed behind with the basket, a little mystified, and feeling that she was already learning many "ins and outs" of the world of which she had never dreamed. Tom Ollison's ready helpfulness was only what her general island experiences would have led her to expect from anybody. But it began to dawn upon Kirsty that this was not quite "the correct thing" here, and also that surely there was some distinction of degree between Robert and Tom, of which the islanders had never dreamed, but which, had they been fairly questioned on such a matter, they would probably have reversed, since the ample hospitality of Clegga Farm and the despotism of old Ollison were much more impressive in their eyes than cramped Quodda schoolhouse, and the light rule of the easy-minded schoolmaster. But there was no doubt that the Branders were "the gentry," the owners of Wallness and St. Ola could be no less, and it was very clear that there was a very different relationship between them and Robert Sinclair, and between them and Tom Ollison. Kirsty had not heard that the first offer of the vacant seat in their trap had been made to Tom, and it never occurred to her that the money she had seen him expend on herself and the Laurensens would have amply sufficed to make him the Brander's cabin companion. It began to seem to Kirsty that Robert must be "more of a gentleman" than Tom. It is a truth, and a very sad truth, that in the great averages of human intelligence and feeling, there is, reversing the divine order, a terrible aptitude to value those who take above those who give, those who are served above those who serve. When Jesus washing the disciples' feet had not become a sacred picture, framed in the sentiment of centuries, but was an actual fact of the day, with all its little matter-of-fact concomitants, perhaps it would have needed another Jesus to fully understand and appreciate the incident. This failure of comprehension and sympathy in the human mind and

heart lies about the very root of many upas-trees of human life, which it is in vain to cut level with the ground, as long as the root remains to sprout again. He who brings one human soul to the perfect and practical understanding of the sacred rule, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all," has done more for the cause of eternal freedom and progress, than he who succeeds in abrogating whole codes of unjust laws, while leaving untouched the Christlessness in which they originated.

Tom found he could just spare time to help the two women with the heavy box up "the stair," on the top "land" of which Mrs. Mail lived. He could not linger a moment more, so that he barely noticed the admiring glances which Kirsty threw round the apartment into which her aunt led her. It was one of two that formed Mrs. Mail's house, which was certainly not too roomy for her requirements, since she had a husband and grown-up children. But in spite of sundry queer gabled corners, it had large, clear-paned windows, a "fitted grate," and "four-post" bedsteads, so that its proportions and appointments seemed magnificent to Kirsty's Shetland eyes. What gay wall-paper! What pretty chintzes! What wonderful ornaments (in the way of Bohemian vases and paper flowers)! And nothing seemed stained with damp and weather, as everything was in Shetland! Oh, what a pity granny was too old to leave home, and too blind to see much if she did! For Kirsty felt as if she had indeed come to a land overflowing with comforts and luxuries. Not in that first delicious bewilderment could she realize what it was to be surrounded by acres of sordid houses, through whose many fever-stricken rooms the fetid air crept heavily, in place of that pure north wind which blew in from the sea to wage a not unequal or unsuccessful struggle with the darkness and disease of the Shetland hovels. Not then could she understand how it felt to lie wakeful at night, listening, not awed and elevated, as she used to be, by the roar of the tempest, but shrinking from the polluting clamor of drunkards and abandoned women in the street below, while the first sounds that would greet one in the morning would be no longer the glad cry of the sea-gulls, but the wails of children who wanted breakfast and found none.

Kirsty was so taken up by all she saw, that she was not very prompt in her thanks to Tom for his kindness, and when she saw him run off, she scarcely realized that he was really away at last, and that there was no knowing when or where she should see him again. Mrs. Mail did not thank him at all; he was only a fellow-steerage-passenger of Kirsty's, who had done a civil thing, and her aunt asked him carelessly if he would stay and take a bite with them, and when he said he was in too great a hurry, she let him depart, without more question or ado.

"Oh! is he really gone?" cried Kirsty, as, looking from the window, she saw Tom scampering off, at full speed, down the street. "Oh! dear, dear, and I scarcely said good-by, or even thanked him!"

"And what's all this work about?" asked Mrs. Mail, dryly. "I asked him to stay for a cup of tea if he liked—one couldn't do no more than that. What's the young man to you, I'd like to know? It

won't do for you to go picking up with strangers and getting so thick with them in this place, I can tell you!"

Mrs. Mail's own daughters kept her hands full and her temper sour, only she judged them to be "pretty well able to take care of themselves." But if she was to have another girl thrown upon her, equally willful and wrong-headed, plus a primitive ignorance and simplicity, then, "there would be a nice mess," and "a piper to pay." So she thought she had better begin at once with mysterious hints and warnings which might keep Kirsty safe in a wholesome terror, until she, too, understood the ways of the world!

"Stranger!" echoed Kirsty, astonished. "That was Mr. Tom from Clegga Farm. He's going up to London with that other one who walked on in front."

"What! the young gentleman who was with Mr. Brander and his daughter?" asked Mrs. Mail.

"That was Robert Sinclair, son of the schoolmaster at Quodda," returned Kirsty, with a slightly resentful accent, for she noticed the difference in her aunt's phrase concerning the two, and did not resent it the less that it was in harmony with her own recent thoughts.

"He's quite a gentleman, whoever he is," said Mrs. Mail. "You might be sure of that, or Mr. Brander wouldn't have been speaking to him. The Branders are real grand people, ever so rich. Very likely the young gentleman is well connected; they think a great deal of that sort of thing."

"I don't think Mr. Brander had ever seen or heard of Robert Sinclair before to-day," persisted Kirsty, still vexed, she hardly knew why.

"Ah! the same sort soon find each other out," said Mrs. Mail, uttering truth in a false connection, as we are all so apt to do. "That's the real thing, as I say to Mail, when he's going on about Freemasonry, and what a grand thing it is for masons to know each other all over the world. Says I, 'Mail, there is none living would ever take you for anything but what you are, and that's a common working man—and no mason at all—but just a plasterer!'"

Kirsty listened, dumb-founded by this flood of new ideas and incomprehensible theories. Her aunt went bustling about. Presently she resumed,

"The girls will be in by and by. It's high time they're come, and they won't dawdle about this evening, keeping me waiting, as they often do, because they're expecting you'd get in about now. As soon as you've had something to eat, I reckon you'll be glad to go to your bed, for there's little rest worth mentioning to be had on board ship. And then I dare say they'll be off out again as they generally are."

Kirsty was just explaining that, though she had been very wakeful during the earlier stages of her voyage, yet she had enjoyed some capital sleep later on, when her cousins arrived, and greeted her with an effusion which would have been kindlier had it not been too palpably inquisitive and even a little sarcastic. They were tall girls, quite young women, and seemed much older than Kirsty, who decided that Jane, the elder, was the prettiest, but that Hannah had the pleasantest manner. They both spoke quickly and shrilly, and addressed their mother impatiently, as if she had always disap-

pointed their expectations, and was sure to do so. They were dressed in very cheap, but showy and unserviceable garments, smartly made. Jane had a long feather around her hat, and Hannah had a bunch of frowsy poppies in front of hers, and she wore a ring with red and blue stones on one of her fingers.

They asked carelessly after "father," and were told that he had got a job which had taken him into the country, and would keep him there for a few days. Whereupon Hannah said jocularly that that was "a good job," and she presently asked Kirsty whether she had quite made up her mind to domestic service? Wouldn't she like factory life a deal better?—one had one's evening to one's self.

"Kirsty's always been used to keeping herself to herself in-doors," said Mrs. Mail severely. "Kirsty's going to get a good situation in a gentleman's house. Kirsty won't trouble herself with none of your nonsense."

It puzzled Kirsty to think that her aunt had not brought her own daughters up to the way of life she seemed to recommend. What was good enough for her cousins would be surely good enough for her. Not, certainly, that she had any leanings that way yet. She was too much dazzled by that probable prospect of service with the Branders in the still remote El Dorado of London.

Hannah proposed to take Kirsty out for a walk, but Kirsty somehow felt that her aunt preferred she should remain at home, and submitted to the implied wish. Then the girls said they wouldn't go out either, on which their mother remarked, "that wonders would never cease," and one of the three suggested that they should look through Kirsty's clothes, "to see if there was anything else she should get in case she had to go off to a good place in a hurry."

Kirsty proudly displayed her few garments, simple in make and substantial in material. The Mail girls laughed at their "old-fashioned" cut, and when their mother admired the durability of their stuff, they told her that nobody wanted clothes which would last so long that they would look as if they came out of the ark before they were worn out. They suggested sundry changes which might be made—a slash here, or a frill there, but Mrs. Mail negatived them all, saying that the Branders would like Kirsty best just as she was—she knew the ways of the gentry—the girl could smarten up afterward. They asked Kirsty about her occupations and companions in Shetland, laughed at her description of her wheel and carders, in which it struck Kirsty that they were at one with Mr. Brander. She ingenuously showed them the picture Tom had given her. They had a great many questions to ask about "this Tom Ollison" as they called him, soon picking up his name from Kirsty's simple remarks, and making her fresh cheeks tingle with shyness at their hints that very likely he was in love with her. Then they showed her their own treasures—the valentines they had received last spring—the remains of their last winter's finery, gewgaws and ruffles, which quite put the Lerwick trumperies to shame. The mother got tired at last of what she aptly called their "fooling," and proposed that they should all retire to rest. "Neither of them was very ready to get up of a morning." So she and Jane retired to the inner room, leaving Kirsty to share Hannah's couch in the kitchen.

Tired as she was, Kirsty was too excited to sleep, and Hannah seemed ready to talk till morning. Didn't she just wish that Kirsty would stay with them and go to work daily with her, instead of going off and be shut up in a kitchen! She thought she and Kirsty would get on capitally together—she did not always hit it off with Jane. Jane preached too much to her. Jane did not stay at home with her mother, or help in the house any more than she did. Jane was as fond of going about as ever she was, only she went about in her own way—a very slow way, it seemed to Hannah, who wanted something more stirring than the singing classes, and reciting parties, and temperance evenings, and tea fights, which took Jane out nearly every evening. Hannah liked a rattling good dance; she knew of many nice quiet places which were hired by people caring to get up little balls. What was the harm of it? She was not one of those who think themselves better than other people. How she would like to take Kirsty to the play! or even to a music hall! wouldn't she open her eyes at the songs and the acting? What was life without a bit of fun? It was bad enough to have to work hard all day, without having nothing nice at the end of it! Did Kirsty ask whether there was not something to be done at home? What was there to do? What was the use of darning stockings when you could buy such cheap ones that you could afford to wear them straight out till they would not hang together any more? What was the good of making one's own clothes, when a girl with a sewing-machine could make them up "stylish," for next to nothing? There was not much washing. They used paper collars and made-up frilling, and what there was, mother did, as also the house-cleaning and the cooking. That sort of work was just fit for old women, whose day was over and who could not enjoy themselves. It would be a pretty thing to shut up a girl to do it. A girl must make hay while the sun shines.

Jane had had a young man, but they had quarreled. Hannah would not wonder if Jane ended as an old maid—wouldn't it be awful? She had no fear for herself, she giggled, though she'd quarreled with two or three young men already—there were always as good fish in the sea as came out. She did not think she'd quarrel with her present beau: he dressed so nicely, quite like a gentleman. She was not sure what he was—in some agency business, she thought. He was so very gentlemanlike and well-spoken, that, as he never mentioned his people, she could not help thinking that perhaps he belonged to some grandees; she had heard stories of lords disguising themselves out of love for poor girls. She knew one or two of those stories were quite true—and what had happened once might happen again. The other girls were awfully jealous about him, and sometimes said the sort of things girls do say when they are jealous, just to make her miserable; but she did not care, not she! What was Kirsty asking about wages? Hannah got about nine shillings a week, all the year around, and Jane perhaps eleven. They each paid their mother four shillings and sixpence a week for their board—that was all. They had the rest to themselves for dress and little expenses. They could not save any. If one took to saving while one was young, when was one to enjoy one's self? The young men could not save much either. They always paid all ex-

penses when they treated the girls to dances, picnics and such like. What did they do when they wanted to marry? Oh, there were plenty of people who would let you have furniture on tick just as the tally-man would let you have clothes. Then you'd begin to save if you could. And if you couldn't manage to pay up for it, then the furniture was just taken away from you, and you had to get on the best way you could. Of course, the fun was all over when you got married, so it did not matter so much. What a queer girl Kirsty must be to take such long looks ahead! They gave Hannah the dumps. She never thought about anything, except whether she was enjoying herself to-day. It was often hard enough to manage that. Her young man said this was the true philosophy--yes, he was very well educated, but she could generally understand the words he used. Oh, Hannah did wish that Kirsty was to stay in Edinburgh, though she couldn't help envying her going to London; and if one was to go to service at all, it was certainly better to go into a big house with plenty of service, such as the Branders' was sure to be, than to some quiet place, all by one's self, where the mistress would have nothing to do but to watch one; whereas, with the other sort one might get some fun; and London people found it so hard to obtain servants that they did not keep too tight a rein over them. And then Hannah's voice began to grow muffled and her sentences incoherent, and at last both the girls slept.

Kirsty did indeed find that "a strong, willing girl from the country" was no drug in the labor market of a capital city. Before the next day was over she had had the offer of another service, in the house of a working watch-maker, a Swiss Protestant, married to a Scotch wife. The family lived in rooms over the shop, and consisted of the father and mother and three daughters, one of whom had been trained to help her father, another was a teacher, and the third assisted in the household duties. They asked no skilled service, only health, strength, and willingness to learn, and they offered a wage of eight pounds yearly. Mrs. Mail replied that "her niece was as good as engaged in the house of a real gentleman, where she wouldn't get less than twelve pounds a year," and when Kirsty was inclined timidly to suggest that the Branders were under no pledge of taking her (for the girl had felt attracted to the kind face of the watch-maker's wife and the bright manner of her daughter), Mrs. Mail tartly told her to trust her for knowing what was what. Did Kirsty wish to be a mere drudge, on a paltry pittance, when she might have light work, more money, more freedom, and plenty of presents and perquisites?—this being the ideal of life in Mrs. Mail's eyes.

However, the watch-maker's offer was made to do service, when the aunt and niece waited on Mrs. Brander. When that lady offered to take Kirsty into her service as "under-housemaid" at ten pounds a year, Mrs. Mail demurred on the score that Kirsty had "had as good an offer without going so far from her own people," and that the only reason for this not being accepted was Mrs. Mail's determination "to have nothing to say to nobody else, if Mrs. Brander would like to hire the girl," and also Kirsty's own alleged wish "to be in a real lady's house, where she would learn how things ought to be." Kirsty sat aside, mute and astonished, but gradually got

into the spirit of a bargain which she found eventually secured her twelve pounds a year, and her washing put out, Mrs. Brander conceding these advantages the more easily that Mrs. Mail readily assured her that Kirsty would require no "evening out" and no monthly holiday.

"You won't know anybody in London at first, Kirsty," said her aunt, as they trudged home together, after the engagement had been made, "and when you've been in the family a while you'll be able to make your own terms. You must look out for yourself, and see that you get your rights. But there's a great deal to be done by good management."

Kirsty was quite familiar with St. Paul's injunctions to servants, "To be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service as to the Lord and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

But poor Kirsty felt that she had come into an atmosphere where these principles "would not work." That was a phrase with which Mrs. Mail and her daughters had already disposed of sundry "ideas" which Kirsty had timidly put forward. And it never occurred to Kirsty that if these principles were steadily set to work, even in one lonely heart and one quiet life, then they might effect a change in the surrounding atmosphere. Alas! was it likely this should occur to her when it occurs to so few of us? For, is it not strange, yet true, that, in a land where the New Testament is held as the sacred book, any beautiful dream of human progress, or any sweet hope of real human brotherhood, or any revelation of true human dignity, is still called socialism, or communism, or anything but what it really is—not perhaps in its wild, unpruned tendrils, but at its living root—to wit, simple Christianity? Can it be that this is so, because by naming it under these aliases, people who say their creed every Sunday, can still boldly declare that "it will not work."

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CHAPTER V.

PENMAN'S ROW.

THE two youths, Robert Sinclair and Tom Ollison, arrived in London in the early morning hours. As their train had sped onward through miles and miles of outlying suburbs, densely built and evidently densely populated, they had wondered when it would stop, and Tom had highly amused their fellow-passengers by his native remarks on the scenes they were passing through. Robert had preserved a discreet silence; his ambition being to speak and act only as other people did, and above all, to sedulously conceal that the experiences of his past life had been such as to render anything here novel and astonishing to him. Most singular is that craving of some human beings for a deadly uniformity. One shudders to think to what it may bring the world, as modern science annihilates

time and space, and draws remote places and people near together. For this craving in individuals "to be like" other people culminates in a base national instinct which readily exchanges ancient customs and national costumes, for the "etiquette of good society" and "the latest fashion," which pulls down historic houses that a grand promenade shall not swerve one foot from its hard, straight line, and forgets its antique prophets and patriots, hid with God in the mists of His glory, that it may dance round brute-faced idols made of gold filched from its own folly! But then the world is God's world, and while we have to do our best for it, it is in His charge, and we must be "careful for nothing." For at the right time, He sent the Persian hordes to shatter the Grecian palace of selfish art, and again, He sent the Roman legions to overthrow the Jewish temple of spiritual pride, and again, He sent forth the Northern barbarians to batter down the Roman fortress of cruel power, and each time, as the wave of human folly and greed was beaten back by the breath of His human hurricanes, the human race itself was found higher and higher on the shores of His providence. And God has untold resources yet, for the deliverance of man from others, and from himself. For He will not rest as the creator of molluscs, the ruler of slaves, or the artificer of automata. He must be the Father of living children, who must each bear his own name, and have his own place.

Does this seem a wide digression from a railway carriage, wherein one boy frankly compares what he knows already, with what he is learning, so that his words refresh the worn souls of the city folks who hear them, as the north winds and dancing waves of which he speaks would refresh their worn bodies; while another lad sits silent, or answers curtly "yes" and "no," lest his kindly interrogators should discover that he had lived hitherto in a four-roomed house, where only peats were burned for fuel, and even refuses to cry out in admiration and wonder at the rich English woodlands, and gay English gardens, because he does not choose to admit that he never saw such things before?

It may be a digression, but only such a digression as it is, from tiny seeds, about to be dropped into the earth, to thickets of well-grown trees which are what shall be their result in after years. For nations are made of men who have all been boys in their day. And what the future thickets shall be will depend on what those seeds are, whether upas or eucalyptus? And what the boys are, that will the nation become.

When the train came to a standstill, the pair had to part at once. Robert Sinclair's railway journeying was not ended yet, though he and his "traps" would have to be conveyed quite across London to resume it from another station. For he was to be placed in the counting-house of an old neighbor of his mother's pleasant girlhood—a Mr. Black, who owned a mill and a granary among her passionately-remembered Surrey hills.

Robert was not left to find his way alone from station to station. A countryfied-looking old laboring man pulled a dusty forelock in salutation of him, and offered to take him and his goods in immediate charge.

"You're Mr. Robert Sinclair, sir?" he said.

"Yes, I am," answered Robert, rather suspiciously. "But how can you know me among all these people?"

The old man smiled with sly humor. "The others be all Londoners," he answered, "and there's no mistaking that you ain't. (Little did he dream how he hurt Robert's vanity!) An' I saw your mother years ago. You've got hair like her, but I don't think you take after her," he added with a side glance at the lad.

There was no such kindly convoy awaiting Tom Ollison. A sharp, lean London lad found him out by mounting guard over the passengers' luggage, and pouncing upon him when he came to claim his box. Tom had not much farther to go, for his work and his home alike would lie in the heart of the city. He was to go into the bookselling business of an old friend of his father's, one Peter Sandison, who had left "the island" many years before, and was quite forgotten by everybody there, except Mr. Ollison, with whom he had kept up a sparse and spasmodic correspondence, which had admitted intervals of silence, sometimes lasting even for years.

The Ollison letters which had gone to London had been homely, scrawling, not always well-spelled epistles, conveying news of marriage, and birth, and death, both on Clegga farm and in neighboring households, their real geniality stiffly packed in the conventional phrases with which each had begun and ended. The Sandison letters which had gone to Shetland, had been prim and precise, seasoned with epigrams on politics and politicians, and occasionally with shrewd counsels concerning investments in government stock or railway scrip. Peter Sandison had never seemed to have anything to tell of himself—no tidings of marriage, or of household event. Perhaps an old bachelor can have no history. He had never even changed his place. In the house where he had gone as clerk and general factotum, he still lived as master, and there Tom was to live with him. How well Tom knew the address which he had so often seen in his father's handwriting on the letters which he had posted for London—"12 Penman Row, Barsel's Inn"—and how strange it was to think that was home now. No, no; Tom refused the thought. Home was nowhere but Clegga farm!

Tom had never seen Peter Sandison, and would of course have said at once that he had no idea what he was like. And yet when Tom did see him, as he came to the shop-door, when the cab drew up, he felt instantly that he had had a preconceived idea which the sight of Mr. Sandison shattered forever. He was a lean man, with high, rather fine features, and an uncertain complexion. His clothes were of the shabbiest, his long hair waved wildly, and he held out a bony hand to Tom. He smiled, too, but the smile lingered on his lips: it did not mount to his eyes.

He seemed a man of few words. With a single brief inquiry after his old friend, Tom's father, he turned and led the boy into a room behind the shop, and inviting him rather by gesture than phrase to partake of a meal set forth on the table, left him there, and returned among his book-shelves.

Tom had no reason to complain of the preparation which had been made for him. To his simple and limited island taste, the rich cocoa, the cold roast, the crisp rolls, and above all the plate of fresh fruit, seemed positively luxurious, and he certainly did justice to

them all. When the edge was taken from his vigorous young appetite, he had time to look about him. He found himself in a small but rather lofty room, ill-lit, though that side opening toward the shop was entirely of glass, in small, quaint panes, the lower of which were screened by green blinds. The room had another window awkwardly set in a corner, from which Tom looked out upon a narrow flagged yard, surrounded by lofty buildings. The general gloom of the apartment was increased by the darkness of its walls and even of its ceiling, which, instead of being whitewashed, was papered with a pattern of full blown roses tumbling out of cornucopias, the whole brought to a fine fruity brown hue, by much smoke, many washings and sundry coats of varnish. But the gloom did not yet oppress Tom Ollison, accustomed to the dark coziness of Clegga, whose few tiny windows were all either skylights, or set low upon the floor. The furniture was in keeping with the apartment. A small round table on which Tom's lunch had been served stood in its center, a small square table, with folding flaps, stood against one wall; there were a few common cane chairs, a big brown press, and a quaint mirror with a beetling frame, made in three divisions, two of which were filled with glass which darkened any visage which might be reflected therein; the floor was covered with the commonest drugget; there was not a single ornament or superfluous article in the room, except a splendid dark Tabby cat, curled in luxurious slumber on an old coat thrown across one of the shabby chairs.

There was nothing in all this to detain Tom's curiosity long. So presently he rose softly, and went into the shop. Mr. Sandison was behind the counter, bending low over a desk, and he seemed to see and hear nothing till Tom said:

"Is there any thing I can begin to do, sir?"

He looked up with a start and a frown, but said, "Good! That's it! You needn't begin to-day, though. Take a bit of pleasure first."

"I'd rather take it second, sir," Tom answered with a shy smile. "I'll enjoy it more."

Mr. Sandison's gray eyes flashed at him beneath their shaggy brows. "Good!" he said again. "Always do what you like. Then one person at least is pleased. Self-interest is the only principle by which the world can go on."

Tom felt puzzled. He had never before heard such sentiments candidly expressed, though, for all his simple-hearted geniality he was acute enough to recognize that they formed the secret creed according to which many act. But how could he reconcile Mr. Sandison's words with what his father had told him, namely, that the only terms on which the bookseller would consent to train him were of so liberal a kind, that Tom's utmost diligence and vigilance could scarcely make the contract fair? Tom looked up at his master with a half laugh, expecting that some turn of his lip or twinkle in his eye would belie his cynical utterance and reveal that it had been made only in jest. But Mr. Sandison's visage was sober and serious, almost saturnine.

He took Tom at his word, and set him a task of comparing the contents of two catalogues of different dates, which kept the lad

hard at work for three hours. Then he bade him return to the back parlor, and "see if he could find anything more to eat." This time, Tom caught a glimpse of a domestic, an old woman, who spoke sharply and in inconsequent answer to one or two civil remarks on which Tom ventured. It was not till afterward that he discovered she was quite deaf.

Mr. Sandison told Tom he did not want him any more in the shop that night; he could go out for a walk if he liked. Tom said he would rather go to his own room and unpack. He had such a curious feeling of having lost his identity, that he wanted to re-assure himself by the sight of his little belongings. As he crept up the dark narrow staircase, past the closed doors of silent rooms, it was really hard to believe he was in the same world with crazy, cozy old Clegga, interpenetrated by the warmth of the great kitchen, and by the cheerful voices of those gathered about it.

He could not help wondering to what other use the lower rooms were devoted, that he had to pass over two flats and go on to the attic floor. He was rather glad of it, however; the big low room, with its sloping corners, was a little more in the style of Clegga than were the rest of his new surroundings. The association was carried out by the rude simplicity of the furniture, by an old maimed spinning-wheel which stood at rest in one corner, and by the pictures on the walls, an old print of "Shetland Shelties," an engraving of a scene from "The Pirate," and a fresh photograph of the Skerries lighthouse. Tom thought that Mr. Sandison had kept very true to the associations of his early youth, and he rather wondered how he had brought a spinning-wheel to the south with him, since Tom knew that he had migrated from the island, a lonely lad like himself. How could Tom imagine that the old print and the new photograph and even the decrepit wheel, were all the purchases of the last few days, made in preparation for his own arrival, because the grim bookseller had remembered how the sight of a pair of "rivlins" (or Shetland skin-shoes) and of a knitting-pin sheath, exposed on a stall at a fancy fair as "articles of interest from Ultima Thule," had refreshed his own home-sick heart years and years before, and had opened up a store of innocent memories which had diverted him from accepting an invitation to a gaming-table.

"Let us give everybody every chance we have had ourselves," Mr. Sandison had said to himself, as he had put up the wheel and hung the pictures. "Though it's ten chances to one if they take it. I believe it's these dumb preachers that do halt of the good—it's little enough that gets done in the world, and they are in no danger of glorifying themselves!"

Tom grew less bewildered, but far more pathetic, after he had opened his boxes and sorted out his possessions. There were no traces of mother or sister among them—no supererogatory stitching—no quaint personal plan, none of those tender little daintinesses which lads, in mingled pride and shamefacedness, scarcely know whether to display or to hide. For Tom's mother was in her grave in a wild Shetland burying-ground, and his only sister, the eldest of the Ollison family, had been married and away from her home for years. It seems singular how often the bliss of these close, natural ties is not enjoyed to the fullest by those who seem best able to ap-

preciate them, but who are left to sow broadcast those seeds of love which others plant in their own gardens for their own ingathering. God must know why it is, and must have a purpose in it. Is not the whole world the Father's garden, and is not the sole object of the children's inclosed plots to train them to work on His wider plan? Are not fathers and brothers and mothers and sisters given us only to teach us how, as St. Paul beautifully expresses it, to treat all elders as fathers and mothers, all men as brethren, all women as sisters? And who shall say that those who can only sow in their Father's larger garden shall not surely reap in their father's longer day?

Such relics of home and homely affection as Tom could boast of, he spread out tenderly. The stout leather-bound Bible, his father's gift, was laid on his toilet-table, and Tom looked reverently at the stiff inscription which had been so laboriously written on its fly-leaf, and thought of the love and goodness that was in it, and not of the final "e" that was omitted from the adjective by "his affectionate father." He hung up the comb and brush-bag, which the servant lass had made and given him, and did not scoff at its gaudy chintz, bright with red, green, and yellow. Perhaps a soft moisture dimmed his blue eyes when he found, nestled away among his new stock of island hosiery, a goodly bag of sweeties secretly stowed there by his father's old housekeeper. He took one or two instantly, just because he felt that the worthy dame had so stored them for his solace in his first loneliness; but he put the rest away in his drawer. They were the essence of home, and must be consumed but slowly, like the last precious luxuries of an Arctic voyager.

In due time he heard the heavy clanging of a bell, and, although he had not been warned to expect such a summons, he thought he had better go down and see if he was wanted. He found Mr. Sandison and the old servant, whom her master called "Grace," both in the little parlor, which looked less cheerless now the lamp was lit. Some frugal refreshments, a jug of milk, and a few biscuits, were set forth upon the table. Thereon, also, lay an open family Bible, before which Mr. Sandison sat. The old woman looked over his shoulder as she passed him, found a place in a small Bible which she carried, and then plumped herself down with a peculiar emphasis on a chair in a corner, and gave a significant sniff. Each time Tom had seen her there had been something in her gait which made him feel uncomfortable, as if he had somehow unconsciously offended her.

Mr. Sandison spoke, looking straight before him, and not seeming to address either of his auditors.

"This was the habit in Shetland," he said. "It is ill to break old habits till one has better new ones. Let us read the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Proverbs."

It struck Tom that this was the thirteenth day of the month. Mr. Sandison read in a low, even, not unmusical voice; it might have been the voice of a much younger and very different man from the gaunt, taciturn old bachelor. He made no comment on what he read, but he lingered over some verses, and paused after them, as if repeating them to himself. Just as he had completed the last there came a rap on the shop-door—the shop was closed now—and Mr. Sandison shut the Bible, rose, and went out himself to see what was

wanted. The old servant rose, too, with another warlike sniff. She chose to see something wrong with the arrangements on the supper table, and lingered to readjust them. Then she looked up at Tom, with angry eyes, and pointing to the Bible, said harshly:

"What's the good of him doing that when he doesn't believe in it a bit? The master doesn't believe in a God."

"Does he say so?" poor Tom ventured to ask, much shocked, but especially sorry, and still oblivious to the fact that he was addressing a deaf woman.

She knew that Tom had spoken, though only an inarticulate sound reached her. She never owned she was deaf; she much preferred to be thought rude or disagreeable. So she hazarded no answer beyond another hostile grunt, and presently went on to say:

"You'd better beware of the master's queer ideas yourself, young man. There's no knowing what they may lead you into. I'll go bail there's something in his own life that accounts for his holding 'em. There's them that don't choose to believe in a God because it don't suit 'em to think of His judgments. Look there!" She seized the big Bible with no very tender hands, and turned to its front fly-leaves. There were two or three of them, evidently made in provision for a family register, and very pathetic to see in the old bachelor's Bible.

Old Grace came round the table to Tom, pushing the heavy book before her with an air of biting triumph.

"Look here!" she repeated. "D'ye see that? There's two leaves fastened up together—fastened so tightly that they'd never be separated without spoiling the book; but you can just see there's papers between 'em. I reckon that's the master's secret, and that it ain't to his credit, though, mayhap, he's got some reason of his own for wanting it found out after he's gone himself an' is done with, as he thinks. I saw him the other day a-reading a book which said our bodies don't go into dust at all, but into gases. I shouldn't be surprised if the master's got a wife and children living somewhere. I reckon he's had his wild times before now. When a man doesn't believe in a God, nor the judgment-day, nor hell, there's a reason for it, so you look after yourself, my lad; and, mind, I've done my duty by you and given you warning."

As Tom went through the shop to the staircase he passed his master, once more bending over his books. Tom thought he might have easily heard all that Grace had said in her unmodulated tones. Yet, perhaps, he was too absorbed, for even Tom's footsteps did not make him look up. But as Tom went by, and said softly, "Good-night, sir," he lifted sad, searching eyes to the bright young face, and let them gaze on it before he held out his hand, and answered kindly, "Good-night, my lad."

Those sad, searching eyes seemed to follow Tom into the lonely darkness of the silent house. He was glad to find himself in his own room. Strange as it was, it had already become a retreat and refuge.

Tom had read and heard of people who were said not to believe in God. He had thought of such as quite apart from human sympathy. But, then, he had never seen one.

"O our Father!" said poor Tom, "bless father and the folks at home, and keep me straight in all these new ways You have set me;

and is it not a dreadful pity if Mr. Sandison cannot believe in You? How sorry You must be! But, then, You know You'll take care of him, just as parents do of children who are a little wrong in their heads. I don't think I ever loved my father so much as when I got better from the fever, and found how he had sat and watched and nursed me while I was so delirious that I called him a bear coming to eat me up, and even tried to strike him."

Tom went to sleep, soothed and comforted. He had not been quite unimpeachable in his knowledge of "The Catechism, with Proofs." He had been addicted to sit beside his father on Sunday afternoons, gazing dreamily over Clegga Bay, talking of simple matters, which often led back to the dead mother and to "sacred thoughts of the heart," rather than to attend the minister's somewhat theological Sabbath class. Perhaps those very talks with the good old father had led Tom to a truer feeling about prayer than too many have. To Tom prayer was "talking with God"—trying to enter into His will and His purpose. It was not mere begging from God. Tom had made few requests to his earthly father. He had been able to trust him to give what was best for his son. His own desire had rather been that "father would tell him what he ought to do."

If all prayer took this form there would be little cavil over the power of prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY.

Two or three days later brought a note from Robert Sinclair to Tom Ollison. It was a short epistle, containing little more than an invitation for Tom to journey down to the Surrey village on Christmas-eve, and remain there till Boxing-day, so that he and his Shetland schoolfellow might spend together the first festive season happening in their absence from home. The proviso was added, "In the event of there being no circumstance which might make it discourteous for Tom on such an occasion to leave the household where he was himself a member." The invitation, couched in these terms, was sent through Robert by the miller and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Black. Robert emphasized this by quotation-commas, and set forth his own sense of the supererogation of its politeness and consideration, by appending to it a dozen lively notes of exclamation!

By the time this invitation arrived, Tom Ollison had learned much about the surroundings of his life from the old servant Grace. He had also discovered her infirmity of deafness, and had found how impossible it was to interrupt her harsh monologues, by questions which might have drawn forth, however reluctantly, qualifying answers. Among other things he had been informed that his master had never been away from home for the last ten years, and for how much longer Grace could not say—that being the time when she took service with Mr. Sandison. She had also told him "that Sunday and Saturday were all the same in that house, so far as the master was concerned; she shop shutters were up, of course, and Mr. Sandison might go out a bit, but not at church-time."

Tom had so far verified her words. He had seen very little of his master on the day of rest; they had their meals together, and Mr. Sandison told him all the books were at his service. Tom noticed, however, that nothing cooked appeared on the table, except the hot water for tea. Grace's duties were never oppressive; but on Sunday they they were a sinecure. Tom had gone alone to the big parish church, venturing shyly into its cavernous shadows, out of which, as his eyes grew accustomed to them, there loomed a vision of crimson velvet and dusty carving, tessellated pavement, and monumental skulls and cross-bones—a mingling of the gloomy solemnity of a mausoleum with the cold state of a public palace, but with very little of the cheery welcome of the father's house. The beautiful service of the English Church was strange to Tom, who could understand so little of the intoning of a very indifferent choir that he could scarcely follow the order in his prayer-book. So he had sat and thought of the little church of Scantness, which had been so like his own home; its rudely flagged floor, bare benches, and big stove seeming but a dignified version of Clegga Farm set in simple order for the higher occasions of its master. And his heart had sickened with a strange sinking which he could not quite understand, for, like most fortunate stay-at-home folk, he had hitherto thought of "home-sickness" rather as a half-fanciful name for a half-fanciful sentiment, and had never dreamed that it can be a suffering so real, as in some rare cases even to sap away life itself.

Grace had further told him that "they didn't keep Christmas," and Tom's only comfort had been that the day of the English festivity would not be embittered by the thought of genial merriment going on at Clegga (though he knew he would be missed), because, in the northern isles, Christmas is kept a few days later, according to the old style of reckoning. At any rate he could be quite sure he was not disgracing his master's hospitality by absenting himself on the occasion. Grace had told him with bitter triumph, as if here, at least, was one habit which she could admire and uphold in him of whom she had such a generally low opinion, that "they had no bothering nonsense of Christmas dinner—nothing at all to make the day different from other days, only that every Christmas-eve somebody always sent her a parcel containing a dress or a shawl. There was no name with it. But she reckoned there were one or two people in the world who knew well her value, though, may be, they hadn't known it in time, and perhaps their conscience gave them a prick, or perhaps they thought such a man as Peter Sandison was not likely to be too liberal in his wages—not that she complained; she knew her infirmities, and that the weak must expect to be put upon."

Tom felt quite surprised at himself for the longing he experienced to accept this invitation, because it gave him a chance of seeing Robert's familiar face; for young Sinclair and he, though always friendly, had not been special friends in Shetland; but now Tom could enter into that sick yearning after somebody with a few common interests and mutual memories which often binds the exile or the aged with ties which seem most inexplicable and uncongenial to those who are not in their pathetic secret.

Tom was half afraid to prefer his request for leave of absence to

his taciturn master, who seemed in his own experience to have proved the common relaxations of humanity to be unnecessary. Poor Tom was but an inexperienced lad, not yet initiated into the world's strange "rules of contrary," whereby it is the rich man who thinks that the poor should be poorer still, and the idle man who considers that the busy do not work half enough; for seldom it is that the "easy-going" make life easy for those about them.

"Sir," said Tom, timidly addressing Mr. Sandison, "my old school-fellow, Robert Sinclair, has written to me inviting me to spend Christmas in the country with him."

Mr. Sandison looked up suddenly, and did not speak for a moment. He even looked down again and resumed his writing before he replied.

"Go, by all means; I think the weather will be good for the season of the year."

"Thank you very much," Tom replied not so much relieved as he might have been by the permission, because he thought a shadow had darkened on Mr. Sandison's face. He lingered, as if in hopes of another encouraging word.

"Go, by all means," repeated the bookseller. His tone was less frigid this time, but he did not lift his eyes from his ledger, and Tom had to be satisfied.

Tom bought Christmas cards for his father, and for every servant on Clegga Farm. Then he bethought him that as he was to spend Christmas with Robert, it would be a kindly attention to send one to Mrs. Sinclair at Quodda schoolhouse, and, instead of buying a fourpenny one for her, bought two at twopence a piece, and inclosed the other for Olive Sinclair. He had never seen much of Olive—had only spoken to her once or twice, and remembered her only as a gaunt, black-eyed girl, who answered in monosyllables. But he thought how much she must miss her brother! His little purchases, postage stamps and all, did not exceed half a crown, for he had the truly gentle sense that the value of such tokens of remembrance is not their cost but their kindness. This was the first money he had laid out in London. And let any who are inclined to sneer at the boyish extravagance, and to suggest that he had better have opened an account with a savings bank, give a thought to a certain box of ointment, which was once poured forth, and to the rebuke which was administered to those who caviled at it. The best investment of money is in human joy. Tom's half-crown certainly gave much pleasure of the simplest and purest kind to eight or nine people. Yet it gave one little pang, too, and that was to none other than Mrs. Sinclair. She never found it words; she strove to keep it from crystallizing into a thought. But that was the only card from the South which arrived at Quodda, and there was no other letter by the same post. Oh! how wicked she was to give a half-reproachful thought to Robert. Why should he waste his money on such things? the love which was between them had no need for such trifles! And yet—! But she would never, never have thought of any omission if it had not been for this token from a mere neighbor. She almost wished it had not come! She gave it to Olive to keep, and somehow after she did that, Olive took her

own card down from the mantel-shelf where she had set it, and put them both away—out of sight.

The shop in Penman's Row was closed on Christmas-eve, at the earlier hour on which it was closed on Saturdays. Mr. Sandison inquired by what train Tom ought to travel, and bade him take care and get off in good time. This sounded kindly, but Tom still thought there seemed a constraint in his manner. He was making arrangements for shutting up, as Tom prepared to go. How could the lad wish "a merry Christmas" to the saturnine man, whose lonely plans he knew so well? And yet he could not go in silence. There was something in the bookseller's sad eyes which drew Tom toward him, despite all old Grace's hints and warnings.

"Good-by, sir," said the lad, and the other words came as by a happy inspiration. "Thank you for your kindness to me, and I wish you all good Christmas wishes."

A porter entered the shop and threw down on the counter a big parcel for "Mrs. Grace Allan" just as Tom passed out. The bookseller followed the lad to the door and stood looking after him as he went down the street.

"I thought I was only thinking of the boy in what I meant to do," he murmured inaudibly, "but I find I was like all the rest of them, only thinking to please myself, for when I find he can please himself better than I could please him, then I am displeased! Well, well, it sha'n't be wasted. If one could only be as sure that somebody gains by every loss!"—and he sighed heavily.

That night, a poor, well-meaning, but shiftless family, of the name of Shand, living in a court opening off Penman's Row, heard a ring at the door bell, and on answering it found a hamper of Christmas dainties standing on the door step, superscribed with their name.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD-FASHIONED WAYS.

THERE had been a light fall of snow during the forenoon of Christmas-eve, and when Tom Ollison met Robert Sinclair on the platform of the little Surrey railway station, and turned with him down the road toward the village of Blockley, he seemed to himself to have arrived in fairyland! He did not know what to admire most, the broad smooth roads, with liberal grass borders, flanked by beechen hedges whose red winter leaves fairly glowed in the last warm rays of the setting sun, or the thickets of trees, the evergreen wealth of giant pines and stately firs serving to bring out the delicate tracery of the bare boughs of oak and elm, or again, the houses—dotted here and there, some small, some roomy, a few new, but mostly old, all with their thatched eaves or red tiles and the indescribable hues of moss and creeper—only adding to the charm of the landscape while giving it human interest. Tom could not find fitting words for his admiration, or for the thoughts it awoke in him, though perhaps their drift may be gathered from his first exclamation.

"I wonder how the people who are born here, can ever bear to go away!"

"I don't know about that!" said Robert, "for, of course I wasn't born here. But I know I should be glad enough to get away. It isn't a place to get on in!"

"Everybody seems very comfortable and well off," remarked Tom, glancing to the right and to the left, at the cottages they were passing, whose muslin-curtained windows and trim interiors, as visible through casually open doors, represented to him the utmost of prettiness and comfort.

"Ah, but you don't know how little many of these people have to live on; not more than they get with us in Shetland—ay, less, for there's nothing here to bring in luck, as the fishings sometimes do," persisted Robert.

"They have very pretty houses," said Tom; "and what a beautiful country it is!" he added, throwing a wider glance around, over the stubble fields and quiet woodlands, to the horizon of low hills, purple against the evening sky, wherein the bright vermilion was fast fading into cool yellow light, softening off through fairy green into placid gray.

"One can't live on beauty," returned Robert, oracularly. "But the people here have no ambition; they only want things to be as they have always been. Many of the families have lived in the same places, following the same callings, for many generations. It's not at all uncommon."

"Well, I don't see any particular advantage in change—unless it is change for the better," said Tom.

"Mr. Black is only the second of that name at the mill," went on Robert; "but that's only because his father married into it. His mother was an Alwin, and the Alwins have been the millers at Stockley since the year one. It's a Saxon name, they say. I suppose the first Alwin came over in one of the early invasions, and planted himself down within as short a walk of the sea-coast as he could. It's a wonder he had the enterprise to get to England at all."

"I don't know that a man need lack enterprise, because when he comes to a place which he likes he has the good sense to stop there," observed Tom.

"Well, I am sure Mr. Black hasn't any enterprise," Robert replied in an aggrieved tone, as if Tom was defending somebody who had injured him. "He says he doesn't see what a man wants with more money than is enough to live on himself, and to leave his place open and in order for those who are to come after him."

Tom thought over this statement in silence. It seemed to him a very reasonable one, almost like the discovery of a first principle of true ambition. But it occurred to him presently that it might be made so subtly to change and enlarge itself as soon to lose all its original meaning. "What is enough for a man to live on?" is a question which cannot be answered except one knows what a man means by "life;" whether he requires only to support his body, as many are driven to do, or also to nourish his mind and develop his moral nature, which is the true thrift for nations and individuals; or, on the other hand, to stunt and starve his morals and mind, and to pamper his appetite, which work of explosive destruction can never be done to perfection without the expenditure of a large fort-

une. Does a man want to "live" in affluence and beneficence on his paternal farm, or to "see life" in metropolitan boulevards and continental spas? Tom Ollison knew little of these things, but great questions condense themselves for simple minds—and he remembered that he had heard his father say that little Clegga farm was prosperously upheld on a less income than served to maintain a certain half-pay captain and his wife, who lived in furnished rooms in Lerwick, drank the best brandy, and paid enormous usury on money borrowed to clear off the further end of a tail of debt which their career dragged after it. So Tom could see clearly that this declaration that a man wants only enough to live on, at once involves the inquiry, "How does a man mean to live?"

"I shall get away from here as soon as I can get a chance," decided Robert.

"I would not be in too great a hurry," said Tom; "one never sees the best of anything at first."

"Oh, don't you think so?" asked Robert. "I do. Novelty itself is always a charm."

Tom was silent. For at that moment despite his appreciation of the rich beauty around, his heart craved for the open sea, and the bare rocks of Scantness! And it seemed to him to have been almost like treachery to those old haunts to have said that surely those born among such loveliness as this would never care to leave it! Ah, those wild and sterile places, like strong and stormy characters, often win the most clinging love, only made the more tender because it deprecates the neglect or contempt of an unappreciative world! Tom waited for the pang to pass, and then said humbly:

"I always think we like things better as we grow used to them. One works best with tools to which one is accustomed."

"I don't want to grow used to Stockley," returned Robert. "Perhaps I might get mossed over like the rest of the Stockleyites, if I stayed long enough—though I scarcely think so. But that is precisely what I don't mean to do. There will be plenty ready to jump into my shoes here, but I sha'n't mind that, if I get a chance of giving them up of my own accord. The old folks have got no children, and I have an idea that I might step into the mill in time, if I chose. But what is it worth, if I do? If I can't do a great deal better than that, well, I don't think much of myself, that's all."

"Where was the house where your mother was born?" asked Tom.

"Oh, it is none of these," Robert answered hastily. "It is at the other end of the village. We sha'n't pass it."

Its tiny proportions did not suit his pride. He wished it had been left in his imagination, and determined to leave it in Tom's. It would be time enough to be frank about the poverty and lowliness of one's family when they would serve only as foils to one's own riches and grandeur. They might tell against one before.

To the end of his life, Tom Ollison never forgot the scene which lay before him, as they turned a corner of the road and came round upon Stockley Mill. The business premises, a picturesque conglomeration of brown timber, gray stone, and red brick-work, with a background of tall pines, stood on that side of the mill-stream which was accessible from the high-road. Across the stream was

thrown a wooden bridge, wide enough for a chaise, or similar modest vehicle, but which had evidently been constructed with little view to any carriage traffic whatever. On that side of the water there was only a footway, flanked by the beechen hedge which Tom had seen everywhere in the neighborhood, and which, besides contributing the beauty of its exquisite color to the somber winter landscape, served, by its quality of retaining its withered leaves until its spring glory was grown, as a perennial screen to the garden behind it. It was only as the lads advanced across the bridge, that a gateway set in the hedge opposite it gave a view of the miller's habitation—a long, low house, so green with ivy that for the first moment the unaccustomed Tom could not be quite sure where the walls ended and the shrubberies began. The last light of the setting sun was strong upon the mill, but the home was in deep shadow outside, for within a glowing fire was evidently newly stirred, and quaint shadows could be seen waving up and down the parlor wall.

Robert opened the gate and let Tom pass in. The garden was in its winter undress, yet Tom made a quick note of its sleek lawn, its numerous flower-beds, its ancient dial and its thatched summer-house. But the gate had clanged behind them and given warning of their approach, so before he had time to utter one note of admiration, a tall female figure enveloped in a scarlet shawl appeared in the porch and claimed all his attention. He did not need to be told she was Mrs. Black. There is something very amiss in the hospitality of any house, whose mistress needs an introduction in that character.

Had Tom himself been an old friend of the family, he could not have found a more hearty welcome. Robert secretly thought that the Blacks must be very desirous of making themselves agreeable to him, to be so zealously friendly to his visitor; perhaps they thought he was not very highly satisfied with his position—indeed he had given them some reason to think so. Little could he dream that while he and Tom were absent from the parlor, during the early hours of Tom's visit, Mrs. Black had said to her husband:

"What a fine open face that youth has! I wish we had got this one instead of the other for our inmate!"

Whereupon Mr. Black had replied, with that resignation of nature for which Robert contemned him:

"We must take things as they are sent to us. You get number one before you get number two, you know, Bessie."

"You get number one very much indeed when you get Robert Sinclair," the wife had answered, with her clear merry laugh.

"What a woman you are, with your quick likes and dislikes!" said her husband, looking at her fondly. "If our own children were with us, I believe you'd have your favorites."

A swift shadow passed over Mrs. Black's bright face. Three little ones had lain in the cradle in that nest of a home, only to be carried out and planted in God's acre. And Mrs. Black's delicate conscience always smote her that one of these had been mourned beyond the others. Neighbors would have said that she had been stricken almost into her own grave by grief for each fading babe. But she herself knew that there was a difference: that she had never known the bitterness of death till she saw her one boy in his coffin. People

had said to her since, that it might be as well when the only son was taken; she might have spoiled him in her loving pride; but she knew better; she could have allowed herself to be very angry with him, she was sure. She might rather have spoiled the girls, feeling that their brother had defrauded them of a bit of their mother's heart. Her husband's chance words smote a tender place.

"Well," she said, "I do wish I liked that Robert Sinclair better, and then I'd give him many a good lecture. He's had a right to two or three already. There's no knowing how much good they might have done him. Everybody has a right to all his rights."

The bountiful table to which Tom found himself invited seemed a type of things in general at Stockley. Its viands were not rich or rare, they were only abundant and perfect in their kind; and Tom could not help casting admiring eyes on the silvery damask, to which an occasional dainty darn only gave the dignity of antiquity. He saw that the heavy old cut-glass was brought forth from closets crammed with the same. The low brown walls of the parlor were well-nigh covered with dim engravings, at many of which collectors would have looked with some interest. If there were a few family portraits in oil which were not altogether works of art or beauty, at least they made manifest that the past generations of Blacks and Alwins had been well-fed, well-clad, kindly-faced people. There were corner-cupboards with quaintly framed glass doors, and other cupboards set into the wall with no doors at all, on whose shelves were stored quantities of old china arranged with less reference to prettiness, interest, or value than to personal associations, delicate Oriental bowls alternating with coarse English pottery. In sundry corners there were little tables, covered with hyacinth bulbs and fragile ferns, which "the mistress" was fostering. In one window stood a cage with canaries, and in the other one with doves. On the hearth-rug was a beautiful beagle, watching with pathetic eyes over two roly-poly pups. From a shady corner in the little entry came a weird laugh, which made Tom look around startled, to the general amusement. The laugh came from a roomy wooden cage, whose inhabitant, a waggish-looking starling, charmed with his success at directing attention to himself, gladly repeated his performance.

The table was attended by a comely damsel, who looked the more like a garden flower that her gown was green and cap ribbons pink. From time to time she whispered announcements to her mistress, to which Mrs. Black evidently responded as soon as the meal was over, by gathering her shawl about her and leaving the apartment. Her husband explained that "the mistress had gone to see after her Christmas gifts—the folks wouldn't take it kindly if she didn't give them a word as well." Presently the scuffle of departing footsteps and a few muffled, but cheery, whispers announced that the recipients were going away well pleased. Mrs. Black came back with the light of the smiles and thanks she had evoked shining in her own face.

"There never was such a place for gifts as Stockley," remarked Robert. "I do believe so much giving has pauperized the people."

"It is not giving that makes paupers," said Mrs. Black quickly. "It is giving without personal acquaintance and liking which does that. Gifts come quite natural between friends, be they rich or

poor. Why should it pauperize Goody Blake if I give her a shawl and a pound of tea any more than it would pauperize you, Robert, if I gave you a book?"

She stopped abruptly. She saw that the merry twinkle in her husband's eye was asking whether there would be much personal liking on her side in any gift she might bestow on Robert.

"I don't think it's good for people to be so much taken care of," said the youth. "It would be better for them to take care of themselves. I believe in self-help."

"For babies?" questioned Mrs. Black. "Nearly every one of us is in some respects a baby as compared with somebody else. When Martha or me want to move the big chests on the landings, we shouldn't like it much if Stack said he believed in self-help, and left us to take care of ourselves."

Martha was the comely servant and Stack was the stout miller's man.

"Stack is paid to work, and it is his interest to do whatever you ask him," said Robert Sinclair. "But I don't believe in the kind of spirit there is down here, everywhere. What is the good of the cottagers having votes? They all vote with the squire—their votes are only so many more for him."

"Well," returned Mrs. Black, "they know the squire, and they know he's a just man and a perfect gentleman, and they reckon, rightly enough, that he knows more of parliament business and parliament men than they do, and they'd rather follow him than go astray. They know the squire's advice is good on matters they do understand, so why shouldn't they take it where they are not quite so clear? I know the squire has never asked a vote."

"He needn't ask them, ma'am," said Robert with a superior smile. "He knows he has them without offering that handle to his adversaries. It's a terrible power for a man to have."

"It's a good power in a good man's hands," persisted Mrs. Black, whose husband watched the argument with contented pleasure; "and the minute it gets into a bad man's hands it begins to shake. A bad man can't influence people without words and threats, or bribes, and then that which is best in people goes against him, and only the weak and mean are on his side. I know power does not go from rulers the moment they begin to misuse it, but it begins to go then, though it may seem to increase. Moths don't destroy a good garment in a week, but they make sure work of it."

"It seems ridiculous to me to see grown-up people made babies of," said Robert. "Think, Tom, the squire's sister thought the snowy lanes would look prettier with some bright colors moving about. So last year, on New Year's Day, she gave all her pensioners, the old women and the little girls, scarlet cloaks. I think that was rather too much, even for their meekness! They wear them as little as they can. The boys call the girls 'Madam's robin red-backs.'"

Mrs. Black laughed. "Well," she said, "I wouldn't have done just so. I'd have given something plain and useful, and would have put the colored cloth into the clothing club, to be bought out, and would have worn something scarlet myself to set the fashion. But the squire's sister means well. There's no denying the red is

pretty in winter time." She twitched her own shawl. "I got this to keep the dear old goodies in countenance," she explained to Tom, "and now I would not exchange it for any duller color. I told them all that if they'd heeded their Bibles they needn't have waited for the squire's sister to teach them what the wise woman knew in Solomon's time."

"It seems to me there is a great deal too much of the squire's sister and the squire," said Robert. The Blacks had apparently encouraged him to speak his mind freely, and he saw no reason to suppress his adverse opinions. "Nobody can build a house without the squire seeing the plans."

"That ended in keeping a second public house with a strange master out of Stockley," put in Mrs. Black. "The Old Red Lion is quite enough for the place, and its host knows his guests, and begins his wisdom where theirs leaves off."

"It's a terrible power for one man to have," persided Robert. Tom Ollison gave his head an inscrutable little shake. Mr. Black spoke at last, and what he said, was:

"You can't get power better placed than with a good man. You may make the best o' laws, and the best o' organizations; but it all comes down to the man at last. If he's good, they'll do, and if he ain't, they won't. And if he's good and they're bad, they won't matter much; and he's bad and they're good, they won't be much account."

"Then what's to be done if the man is bad?" said Robert.

Mr. Black gave a quiet chuckle. "We must take care that he isn't," he answered. "Each man has got to look after one man, and that's himself."

"That's exactly what I say!" exclaimed Robert, while Tom remembered that cynical utterance of Mr. Sandison's which had so puzzled him on his arrival in Penman's Row.

"Take care you're not misunderstood, John" warned Mrs. Black.

"Each man has got to look after his own duties and other folk's rights," said the good miller, "and after he's done that, honest, for a little while, he'll find the two fit like hand and glove. And now hark to the waits! I've heard 'em every Christmas-eve o' my life. We stick to the old hymns o' these festivals, though we try a new one sometimes, in the choir o' Sundays. There's a time for bringing in new things, and a time for keeping up old ones; and I remember a verse my father used to repeat:

"Let us see the old faces
Beam in the old places,
Let us taste the old dishes
And wish the old wishes,
Let us sing the old songs
And forget the old wrongs,
Let us toast the old glories
And tell the old stories,
For half o' the pleasure o' all Christmas days
Is in regular keeping to good old ways!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A QUEER MAN.

TOM OLLISON found his two days' visit to Stockley Mill all too short for the wonders and delights of the quiet, deeply-stored, old-world life, which seemed to him rather fresh than new, because he had known it before in story and poem. He seemed almost to have lived before through that Christmas morn, when the household from the mill walked over the snow, gleaming in the sunshine, to the little ivy-covered church. Surely the rich glow of the old painted windows was not something he had never seen before! And the voices of the choir and the school-children singing, "O come, all ye faithful," came to him like an echo from a dream. And when the simple service was over, and after the silent prayer which follows the benediction, as the little congregation stood up in obeisance to the squire as he passed down the aisle, Robert Sinclair kept his seat, but Tom Ollison stood up with the rest, and did not feel the less, but the more of a man for doing so. For the stately, white-haired old gentleman was clearly "a father in Israel," an aristocrat, "one of the best," as the dictionaries tell us. And as Tom glanced round the crowd, where the very poorest looked comfortable and well-cared for, and as he thought of the scores of happy homes outside, he reflected that much that he saw must be due to the just and gentle rule of the Manor House, and that a reverent and kindly courtesy was as due from these people to this worthy successor of worthy sires as it is from children to a parent, and that any guest should join in the good customs of a community as he would in those of a household.

The squire had nods and smiles for all around, but he also had friendly words for the aged, the infirm, and the widow, and little caresses for the widow's children, which left something solid in the little hands after he had drawn his own away.

"The worst of it is, that the squire hasn't a son to come after him," Mrs. Black had told Tom, as they walked home. "When he dies the estate will go to a distant kinsman, whom none of us know. When the squire was young he fell in love with a poor earl's daughter, and she liked him, and her folks were pleased, knowing his family was older than hers, and thinking that Stockley Hall would be an honorable quiet down-sitting for her. But she'd lived on the edge of the Court, poor thing, and had got a hankering after the extravagance and gayety she couldn't rightly share in, because the earl was so short o' money. And there came by a rich iron-master—it was just when railroads were doing their best or their worst in the country—who could have bought up Stockley with little more than one year's income. And the iron-master fancied her ladyship, and she threw over the squire, and took him! And the squire never looked at anybody in that way since. I've heard say that some have asked him whether it wasn't the duty of one in his place to marry and keep up the old line; but that he made an answer, that was the squire's duty, but the man's duty came first, and that was to marry no woman unless he loved her."

"I only wonder he'd ever cared for such as that lady must have been," rejoined Tom, the rash and inexperienced. "She must have been a mean, low-minded sort."

Mrs. Black gave a superior smile. "Ah! there's mysteries in falling in love," she said. "Them that has done it wisest will always tell you it wasn't of their own guidance. It all comes from above. 'A prudent wife is from the Lord'—His best blessing to a man. But His next best is to keep away an imprudent one, and that's what a vain, foolish woman always is."

"But this lady seemed to know how to look after money," said Tom, "and 'prudence' sounds as if it meant that."

Mrs. Black laughed. "That's what the parson said one Sunday," she replied. "He said exactly that—that people thought prudence meant looking after money; and that their idea of looking after money was getting it to spend on one's self, or to keep to please one's self. 'Whereas,' said parson, 'prudence means providence, or foreseeing, looking after the real things that we really want—love, and wisdom, and true comfort, and trying to secure them for as many as we can.' I've always remembered what parson said about that, because I'd been feeling after it in my own mind, and it was like suddenly hearing a tune that has been running in one's head, but that one couldn't quite catch."

"It's the sight o' parson and o' his own ways that's kept me in mind o' those words," said Mr. Black. "When you've got a pretty picture it's well to have a sound wall to hang it on. There's the parsonage, young gentleman," and the good miller pointed to a long, low cottage standing in a bowery garden, not unlike his own home at the mill. "If you want to know what is in a shilling, and what can be made to come out of a shilling, don't go to the poorest folk i' Stockley; go there."

Tom eagerly drank in all the homely wisdom. The good seed fell on ground prepared for it. Now everybody should be always prepared to sow, because nobody knows where good ground may be. Sometimes there are a few inches of it in midst of a morass or in the cleft of a rock. But God's field of the world needs all sorts of agricultural labor besides sowing. It has good ground which must be broken up by steady discipline, ground which must be manured by heavy experiences, ground which must be altered by the bitter chemistry of loss and remorse.

Robert Sinclair walked beside the Blacks, and hearing them "go off," as he put it to himself, "into their usual chatter," relapsed into a train of thought of his own—a calculation as to the sum which would be produced by a certain rate of interest on a certain sum of money in a given term of years.

Let not those who speak wisely lay too much unction to their souls! If they do see of the fruit of their lips, let them remember that there must have been as much wisdom in the ears that heard as in the tongue which uttered. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." But if the ear-ring falls into the gutter, it will only be trodden under foot.

And then the pleasant visit was over. Mrs. Black herself stepped down to the railway station with Robert Sinclair to see the young

guest away. Stockley people were never afraid of seeming too civil or too kind. And just at the last minute Stack, the miller's man, appeared, carrying a big hamper to be stowed under Tom's seat in the train, Mrs. Black vouchsafing no explanation except that "nobody should ever come into the country without carrying a bit of it back to the town." And Tom was whirled off, nodding back to her waving handkerchief; and somehow father and Clegga Farm did not seem quite so far away, now he had made friends with these kind people nearer at hand.

Very dark and dismal looked the London streets as Tom wended his way through them toward Penman's Row. And yet, so inscrutable is the human heart! Tom felt that this temporary going away from it had made the dull old house there seem more home-like. It had certainly flashed into Tom's mind when Robert expressed his determination to leave the mill, that this might give him a chance of quitting the gloomy shop and its not very congenial labors, and of taking Robert's vacated place. But the thought had only come to be dismissed. Peter Sandison was his father's friend, who had made generous terms with him for his father's sake. And Peter Sandison looked at him with sad eyes. And it was said that Peter Sandison did not believe in God! Strange reasons these for loyalty and love! But then loyalty and love so often grow best from no reason—which means generally but reason too deep for words, or even for defined thought.

Our lives are never fairly poised or truly rich, unless there is something outside our own orbit which we can love and enjoy without coveting to possess. What would the earth be without the sunbeams? But what would happen to the earth if it at once rushed off to join the sun? Tom felt that Penman's Row should be cheerful enough when one's work was there, and while one had memories of Clegga and thoughts of Stockley to carry with one into it. The gloom and the perpetually shifting crowd of strange faces had already ceased to oppress the soul of this son of the rocks and the sea. They began to stimulate his imagination, suggesting to him that human life could overmatch nature in every mood and aspect.

Mr. Sandison met Tom with a smile and a kindly word. He looked happier than he had done on Christmas-eve, so that Tom hoped that he had enjoyed himself after his own fashion. It was not for the youth to guess or to fathom that the dreariness of his master's lonely wandering among the holiday crowds, his aimless watching of happy groups, had merely ended in a sad thankfulness that another Christmas of his allotted number had gone by!

Early in his dismal Christmas stroll, Mr. Sandison had come in front of an open door, over which was painted, "Refuge for destitute strangers." Saying to himself that the omission of the descriptive adjective would have spared paint, politeness, and pain, he yet went in, half out of curiosity, and half out of a strange yearning both toward those who needed such help and those who rendered it. A Christmas breakfast had been given, and when Mr. Sandison entered between the delivery of little addresses, ladies and gentlemen were moving to and fro amid the pathetic crowd. The bookseller quietly ranged himself among the battered women and broken men, who were accepting precept and exhortation with all the meekness

with which the defeated are expected to take whatever the victors give. His own shabby, carelessly-used coat easily seemed the threadbare garment of a decent poverty, and there was scarcely a visage there more rugged and worn than his. A dressy little woman, wearing more ornaments and *faux-de-rals* about her than she could have decently sported in a drawing-room, and flaunting them in the face of those monuments of human misery, "because the poor don't like you to come among them shabby, you know," fussed up to the new arrival. She had whispered to a friend that this looked "an interesting case," one of the sort that might figure in a paragraph on "University men to be found in the kitchens of common lodging-houses." Her little figure stood beside Mr. Sandison's gaunt dignity, like a gayly painted shanty under the gray wall of a noble ruin. She gave a perky little cough, and opened her mission.

"Is it not very nice for you to have a room like this to come to?" she said. "Don't you think it is very kind of all these dear people to leave their own beautiful homes to come here to welcome you just like friends? Is it not something to be very thankful for?"

"Madam," replied Mr. Sandison with a melancholy humor, "in my old-fashioned school of manners, the guests gave the hosts voluntary thanks: the hosts did not suggest them. But it is some years since I have mingled in any society, and ways seem changed."

The lady did not quite understand him. She only knew that she did not get the gush of gratitude which she expected, and she was in a measure disconcerted. "I'm afraid you have not had a very happy life, poor man," she remarked, and there was at least as much blame as pity in her tone.

"Madam, I am quite sure of that," said Mr. Sandison.

"Is not that partly your own fault?" she inquired. "Do you love God? If you love Him you must be happy."

"I want to find somebody who believes in Him," answered Mr. Sandison. "How can we love whom we do not know?"

The lady thought she had got into an incident after her own heart. She fussed all over. She seemed no longer one woman, but rather twenty crowding round.

"My dear man," she cried, "surely you have found what you seek! We all believe in God here. Is not our love for our poor and afflicted brothers and sisters the best proof of our faith?"

Mr. Sandison pointed grimly to the words above the door. "Is that what you call your brothers and sisters?" he asked. "How can they be destitute if all your hearts are really full of love for them? Take out that word—that adjective, which must be bitterest to bear where it is truest. And what do you know of me which gives you any right to think that you can exhort me? I am older than you by many years. You see that I am sad and careworn: you think me poor. All these points, madam, should on the face of them rather invite you to ask to learn of me. You simply feel that you must be wiser than me because you believe yourself to be more fortunate and richer. Madam, was Jesus Christ Himself fortunate and rich? If you saw Him to-day you would not call Him Master, you would call Him a destitute stranger, and ask Him to thank you for amusing yourself with feeding Him and preaching to Him."

The lady shrunk back. Her small face grew pale. As Peter Sandison turned and strode from the room, she whispered, "One of those dreadful socialists, I do believe. You cannot think what awful things he said! He spoke quite coarsely. The more we do for these people, the more they hate us. The world is growing very wicked."

But when, after all was over, a paper was found in the plate in the lobby, on which was written, "To be used for the refuge of my brothers and sisters whose names I do not know," and in which were folded two sovereigns, then the lady remembered that a certain radical and "peculiar" viscount was addicted to frequenting such assemblies in disguise. "Dear man," she sighed, "he would be such a gain if we could bring him round altogether to our side—to the right side. He spoke so cleverly. I saw at once that there was something most remarkable about him. Those people can not disguise themselves, do what they may. A practiced eye sees a subtle something!"

What would she have done had she known that this was no viscount, no out-at-elbows university man, not even an interesting and picturesque criminal, but just plain Peter Sandison, bookseller, of Penman's Row!

Later on, during Christmas-day, he had strayed into a church, and had sat down in a corner where the dust was thick upon the cushions, and damp and mildew had seized on the prayer-books, with names of dead people, and dates of forgotten anniversaries on their discolored fly-leaves. Peter Sandison had smiled a weird smile when the preacher, a mild young man newly ordained, after dwelling on the blessings given to most at this season richly to enjoy, had gone on to speak of "resignation," and to suggest cheer for those whose joys were of the things gone past: "Let them still thank God for those joys," he had said; "let them be content to wait without them for a while, measuring by their sweetest memory the joys which hope has in store." And Mr. Sandison had wandered out again—there had been no word for him. He did not know that he had been disappointed: he would have denied that he expected anything.

When Tom came back from Stockley he carried his hamper into the parlor and asked Grace's aid in unfastening it. The master seemed to suspect what was going forward, for he came in too.

"Won't you invite me to see your gifts, Ollison?" he said.

"I didn't think of troubling you, sir," Tom answered, delighted.

"What's the good of stuffing a basket with rubbish like this?" observed Grace, lifting out first some small holly boughs, rich with berries. But Mr. Sandison lifted them tenderly, as if he wouldn't knock off a berry for the world, and—smelled them.

"La!—don't you know they haven't no scent?" snapped Grace.

"They have a country freshness," said Mr. Sandison, gravely, knowing that only Tom would hear his words.

"That's more like the thing," Grace went on, lifting out a plump pullet. "And here's eggs; and here's apples; and here's a pot of jelly. These folks are a making up to you for something, Master Tom."

"They are such good people," remarked Tom to his master, un-

heeding the old woman's words, "and Stockley is such a pretty place—oh! beautiful, one can scarcely believe in it."

"Don't you wish that you and your Shetland comrade could exchange?" asked Mr. Sandison coolly.

"No," said Tom, as honestly as stoutly, "I like sticking to my own lot."

"But if Stockley had been your lot you wouldn't have wished to exchange it," persisted the bookseller.

"No, sir, I shouldn't," Tom answered, "and I'd have stayed at Clegga if I could—but I half think I'm glad I couldn't; I'd never have known the best of Clegga if I hadn't come away."

Mr. Sandison laughed, and then sighed.

Grace came back from storing the good things in her pantry. She now carried a parcel in her hand, and as she came in, Mr. Sandison rose and went out of the parlor into the shop.

"I'm going to show you the grand present I got this time," said the old woman. "I come just as you went away." She spread out a thick gray shawl, fine in texture, and delicate in hue. "You see there's somebody feels I'm worthy a good present," she went on, "though I believe the master thinks they must be fools for their pains, for he'll hardly throw a look at it. But it's odd how everything gets taken advantage of, and put to bad purposes in this world. Of course it has got talked about, how I've had these beautiful things sent to me by somebody unbeknown. Indeed, I've told many of the young hussies round that it was a good lesson to them, that if they did their duty it would get recognized somehow. An' now them worthless Shands, in Penman's Court, are making believe that the like has happened to them! Set them up! I can see through it!"

Grace was folding up her shawl with elaborate care while she talked.

"They just wanted some Christmas feasting," she proceeded. "And what with their perpetual poor mouth about misfortunes, and their debts and so forth, they thought it would not do to get some above-board. Indeed, I don't know how they could get it honest—and lies come in particular handy to hide worse things!"

"What can be worse than a lie?" asked Tom. But of course Grace did not hear.

"So they gave out that on Christmas-eve there was a ring at their bell, and when they went to the door, there was a basket there, with all sorts of good things in it—a turkey, and a plum-pudding, and six mince pies—and what do you think? (that's the way liars always overdo it!) a bottle of rich gravy to be heated and served with the bird! 'There, that'll do,' said I, when Mrs. Shand showed me that. 'Gratitude,' says I, 'ought to be enough to season charity, without gravy,' and on she went holding up a beautiful bag of ready-made stuffing as well. It made me sick to see her, it really did! As if anybody would go giving turkeys and gravy to poor miserable objects that haven't, and never could have, no right to such things."

As Tom went off to his bed that night, he could not help wondering who it was that so faithfully remembered Grace, and what she could have done to win their affection and respect. And then he remembered that God, who cares for everybody, reaches each by

some human hand, though it may give but a chill and clumsy touch. "We look at God through those who love us," he said to himself. "I always see Him behind father, as it were. I wonder whether anybody will ever be able to see Him behind me?"

CHAPTER IX.

MR. SANDISON'S QUESTION.

It was not very long before Robert Sinclair received his eagerly expected invitation to "spend an evening" with the Branders. There was in it a clause directing him "to bring his young Shetland friend with him." But, in the meantime, Robert thought fit to ignore that clause. He could feel quite sure Mr. Brander had only put it in as a matter of course—probably imagining that the two youths were living together, or, at all events, seeing each other every day. It was certainly very kind of Mr. Brander to invite him, thought Robert; it was quite supererogatory kindness that he should also invite Tom Ollison. It was not good policy to be very ready to force one's friends upon those who might be willing, out of civility to one, to extend their hospitality to them. If he found that Mr. Branders proved the sincerity of his invitation to Tom by repeating it, then it would be time enough to take him, and he was sure it would be pleasanter for Tom not to be taken to a stranger's house, until an old friend had a sure footing in it.

But Robert was thrown into a little perplexity by the Branders' invitation, which was given in the free-and-easy style of some wealthy people who are quite above consideration of the limitations of train service and such like trifles. It was simply impossible that anybody limited to such arrangements could come in and out, from Stockley to Bayswater, "to spend an evening." If the Branders had been staying in such "a corner" they might have done it with their own carriage and horses, though they would probably have preferred to "put up" for the night at some London hotel. But Robert had no equipage, and to go to a hotel involved an outlay which made him reflect, though he decided that it must be made, rather than that such an invitation should be forfeited. He felt the Branders' want of consideration almost like a compliment; it seemed as if they saw him on a level with themselves, and forgot that he had not all the same advantages.

"One can't expect those who don't have to trouble about such trifles to remember them for others," he decided.

Still, he did shrink from hotel charges. If he had to pay them, he would have to withdraw from the savings-bank the trifle he had already deposited there. To be sure, he argued, one saved that one might invest, and such an extravagance must be regarded in the light of an investment, for the favor of the Branders represented to him the road to fortune. But, still, would it not be possible to spare the savings for some other investment? For if he was to grow into intimacy with the Branders, he would need many little things, for one must not parade poverty before rich people. Why should he not ask Tom Ollison to take him in for one night? This seemed to him

a happy inspiration. He knew Tom had a room to himself, and that Mr. Sandison was a Shetland man, a bachelor, and one of whom Tom spoke kindly. His employer had already given Tom a pleasant holiday. Why should not Tom's employer do him a favor? The favor was asked and readily granted, so readily and cheerfully that Robert, according to his nature, decided that the favor was all on his side, and "that Mr. Sandison and Tom must be really glad of any change to enliven them." The only person who did not seem delighted was Grace, who was not by nature an entertainer of strangers. One would have thought that she feared lest Robert might be deaf like herself, for she certainly wrote her grumpiness so plainly on her visage that nobody but the blind could have doubted it. It had occurred to Robert that this arrangement of spending the night at Mr. Sandison's house might prove very convenient and economical for him, during the several visits which he foresaw he was likely to pay to the Branders, before the happy consummation of leaving Stockley altogether, toward which he was steadily feeling his way. Grace's sour face first suggested to him a possible check to this nice little plan. He judged that neither the master nor Tom would find it very pleasant to have him for a guest, if she set herself against him on the score of giving her extra trouble. So he made up his mind to fee Grace; it was economy to give her an occasional shilling, rather than to spend at least three or four shillings on "beds and breakfasts." He rather thought that Grace would draw back from his offered bounty, and that even if she took it, he would score by it, and by bespeaking her good graces prevent any necessity for similar propitiation too often. But though Grace had really expected nothing, she was equal to the occasion, and to him. Her skinny fingers closed over the coin as if the *douceur* was a matter of course. She uttered no thanks, but looked at it in a way which made Robert feel that she thought it ought to have been half a crown. By that diplomacy, Grace secured a repetition of the gift on each of Robert's visits. She was as greedy of gain as he was, though her ambition was limited to a few pounds, while his imagination rose to thousands—sometimes of mere capital—but more and more often of income!

Robert's visits to the Branders and his thrifty retreat from their grandeur to Mr. Sandison's homely hospitality were repeated several times, before he attained the desire of his heart and secured the offer of a seat in Mr. Brander's office. Naturally the lads exchanged sundry confidences as they lay in the darkness of the wide attic, into which a stray moonbeam might steal and illumine the old wheel, which Robert said ought without delay to be put to its best use, as firewood. Robert soon divined that the master of the house was "queer;" indeed Grace seldom allowed anybody to have any doubts on that subject. Tom was led into a solemn whisper of her assertion that Mr. Sandison did not believe in God, and hoped for no hereafter. Robert opined "that such notions would do him no good in his business," but conjectured that probably he did not mind that, since he was doubtless a miser and rich enough already, and would very likely leave Tom all his money if he did not offend him.

Then he proceeded to tell Tom, who lay dumbstruck, that after all, he believed he had found out that Mr. Brander was as glad to

secure his services as he was to give them to him. Mr. Brander was evidently getting tired of over-application to the details of his business, and he clearly had an aversion to taking a partner and a strong mistrust of his own head clerk. Robert Sinclair could quite understand his having a desire to take up some young man, whom he could train into his own ways and from whom he need fear nothing for years, by which time he would have made their interests identical. Robert Sinclair giggled at that point and Tom Ollison felt utterly mystified.

Robert went on to say that he thought there seemed to have been a marvelous intervention of Providence for the purpose of securing him a career and a fortune. He believed that under the circumstances it was very advantageous to him to have come from Shetland—it gave the stockbroking office in the city a delicate aroma of that “island of mine,” and of “the castle on my estate,” of which he had already shrewdly observed Mr. Brander liked to boast. Also, doubtless, Mr. Brander felt that his promotion of a young man from Shetland would make him popular there, and serve to facilitate his dealings with a primitive people, apt to distrust strangers, and to connect gentlemen dealing in finance with those “lawyers” whom they have held in abhorrence for all generations.

And then Robert went on to talk about Etta Brander. She went much into society, he said. He heard she was out nearly every evening, either at a dance, a *conversazione* or a concert. But he noticed he was always invited when she was to be at home. He thought Mr. Brander was very fond of Etta. He should not wonder if the father would be very glad for his daughter to marry somebody who would be, so to say, in the family, and would have only mutual interests—always provided of course that he was in a position and had talents, suitable to the family and fit to promote its fortunes. It was strange—was it not?—and Robert gave another little laugh, how often the old stories made success run on these lines! Even Hogarth’s good apprentice marries his master’s daughter. All that used to seem to him too much in the region of romance, unexpected, illogical, not to be looked for, but he saw now that it was in an almost inevitable sequence, not due to weak indulgence in foolish romance, rather perhaps to wise restraint from it. And there Robert actually sighed—having already adopted the singular affectation of offering one’s self a sacrifice to one’s own ambition and lust for “getting on.” Well, Etta Brander was certainly a pretty girl—and he supposed she was clever—and the realities of life must always be considered, and one had one’s duty to them to carry out.

And there Robert stopped short, checked by Tom’s dead silence. It only made him feel that he was making a fool of himself—that probably Tom was quietly laughing at him as one “who was counting his chickens before they were hatched.” He became suddenly conscious that his strain of talk was weak and foolish, that it might even be bad policy. It was the last time for many years that Robert Sinclair was betrayed into such forecasting confidences.

In reality, Tom was silent, not in mirth, but in misery. He did not think of Robert’s words in any special connection with Robert. They might be either true or false concerning Robert’s future, and yet there might be a truth in them very damaging to what had al-

ways seemed to Tom such a pretty ideal—the humble lad, heart-smitten by the maiden above him, silently doing his duty without any hope of her, till gradually duty brought him out beside love, on a level with her! Misty castles in the air had often risen on poor Tom's own mind, all the more silvery and ethereal, perhaps, because there was no possibility of his putting an exact foundation under them. Sweet faces had glanced upon his vision from those wonderful surging waves of London life (from whence do glance some of the sweetest faces of the whole earth), and Tom had thought how would it have been if the dim silent old house in Penman's Row had been lit by the good beauty of a daughter? He and she might have been such close friends; she might easily have liked him a little if her father praised him. And then perhaps some day when the master grew too old and tired for his work, and thought regretfully of leaving the old place, Tom might have asked eagerly, "Why should not they all stay on together?"—and father, too, might have liked to come down from Clegga, and the two old friends and school-fellows could have smoked a quiet pipe together, and perhaps have made a little fun of the young people, with their grand new theories, and their daily practice humbly halting after. Dreams! dreams! And in his own particular case, Tom Ollison had always known these were nothing more, for the house in Penman's Row was a lovely one, and his father's friend was a kinless man. But if there is something vexatious in having a night vision of angels and heavenly music and beauty dissected down into a nightmare remembrance of twelfth-day cakes and Christmas numbers, can there not rise an untold bitterness when youthful ideals of loving service and loving triumph are declared to be mere euphuisms for worldly prudence and success? Poor young people, who have not yet acted out their own little drama on the stage of life, are terribly susceptible to any whisper that life has no drama at all, but only a very cleverly managed marionette show.

Robert had fairly left Stockley and had even been for many months in Mr. Brander's office within a stone's throw of the Stock Exchange, before he saw fit to tell Tom that the stock-broker had been constantly asking when the other young Shetlander was coming to put his foot under the mahogany of his dining-room in Ormolu Square, Kensington. Tom was not very eager to accept the invitation. Perhaps he lacked a laudable desire to see society in all its phases; perhaps he believed in the quaint fable about the danger of the golden jar and the china one floating too near each other: perhaps he was like that Shunamite woman who was so tamely content "to dwell among her own people."

But when Mr. Sandison heard of the invitation, he bade Tom accept it.

"Take a rich man's kindness for what it is worth," he said, in his grim way. "He can't go without half his crust that he may offer it to you, that is not in his power. But he does his little best when he orders another partridge for your pleasure."

Mr. Sandison had such slight delight in personal conversation that he had actually never heard the name of Robert Sinclair's new friend and patron up to this point. Now Tom mentioned it casually.

The master bent down lower over his desk and seemed so absorbed

in his papers that Tom did not think he was any longer interested in the matter. Suddenly, however, he looked up and said in his very harshest manner,

“Have these—Branders—any children?”

“One,” answered Tom briefly. What could it be in the dry manner of the old bachelor which made the hot blood tingle on the youth’s cheek.

“Son or daughter?” asked Mr. Sandison.

“One daughter,” Tom replied again.

Mr. Sandison went on with his writing. And his thoughts were trite enough, for he only reflected that the world is a little place, and goes round, so that whomsoever we have met once, we may certainly look to meet again, and that life is a history that repeats itself, so that as we turn and watch those who come after us, we are apt to see them fall into the same pits which waylaid ourselves. It is our business to cry out and warn them of their danger. Mr. Sandison knew that a word from him, hinting that this visit to the Branders had better not be made, would have been rather welcome to Tom than otherwise. But then, how can we be quite sure that there is still a pit at the same turning in life where there was one in our time? Alas, we cannot be quite sure, until we see the runner tumble in, and then our warning is too late! But if we cry out too soon, we may but turn him aside from a pit which has been filled in, and is now quite safe, and startle him on to some ground unknown to us, where there may be gins and traps we wot not of. A careful and thrifty youth may be developed into a miser by the warnings of a spendthrift against the extravagance which ruined himself. A reserved nature may grow unsocial and self-righteous under the exhortations of the enthusiastic and warm-hearted who have suffered themselves to be easily misled by bad companions. It is an old truth, that our experience is for ourselves, we cannot teach it nor bequeath it. Frantic efforts to do either more often lead to harm than good.

Yet the wisdom earned by past mistakes and sufferings is not wasted. What we are is the result of what we have been, and what we have done; and what we are will always tell as the most powerful warning and encouragement to those who follow.

Mr. Sandison went on with his writing, and held his peace a while longer.

Had he any right to infer that what certain people were twenty years ago, they still remained? Was he himself the same man now that he had been then? And had he any just reason for judging that a child must resemble its parents? Had he not sometimes, in bitter rebellion against the very doctrine, been ready to assert its flat opposite? How was it that just now, when an ancient wrong was astir in his heart, it seemed so likely to be true? Oh! how often he himself had had to hear it! Might he not take his revenge on the world, and assert it this once? It would be but saying it once for a hundred times he had heard it, and in such a percentage as that it must surely be true! Besides, what was the use of setting his own private feeling against the wisdom of the world? The wisdom of the world had always triumphed over his feeling, why should he not let it have its way now, when it beat time with his own passionate bitterness?

No, never! Though the cruel law of hereditary bondage might be true in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, yet there was his own feeling against it, and that must count for something. If the inexorable laws of the dumb universe do bind iron chains about the race that struggles among them, that is enough; no need that humanity should add another link to its own fetters.

In the white heat of a personal agony his own heart had beaten out a passionate protest against the heartless verdict of a heartless world. In a moment of suffering from an old personal wrong, should he throw down his own arms and snatch at the base weapon from which he had striven to defend himself? No; such was not even a meet opportunity for him to admit that the weapon might not be all base, that there might be some temper in its metal.

To honest hearts, that which they have condemned as a lie, is never so hateful as when it presents itself in their own interest. And yet there was a fiery indignation within him which would not keep wholly silent. Bitterness against his own enemies, against facts which had darkened his own life and wrecked his own faith, he could suppress, if he could not conquer. But he could not help saying:

"Go out into the world as much as you choose, Tom, only never care for anybody or trust anybody. Study your kind as you would the wild beasts at a show, and be good to them, only always feed them through the wires of a wise indifference. You may hold up flaming hoops for them to jump through if you like, then they will fear and obey you: but don't begin to caress them, unless you do so as an experiment in getting bitten. So much for the world of 'affairs,' as the French call it. As for the social world, when you go there take a mosquito-net as part of your outfit. And remember it is the female insects who sting."

Tom said not a word in answer to this tirade. It did not make him really think a whit less of humanity, as the perusal of some chatty newspaper articles, or the hearing of some playful semi-philanthropic speeches might have done. It only made him realize that there are terrible risks to be run on the field of human life, and that he need not be too sure of escaping where his father's old friend had certainly received some deadly wounds.

How much cynicism is the growth of individual pain! He who is too proud or too gentle to name or to wound his own foe is rather apt to curse or to lament on a grand scale. Woe be to those whose deeds turn their brethren into accusers of the world or of society, of their sex or of their rank!

"You had better have something to eat before you go to their grand late dinner," said the bookseller, with a return to something like his ordinary manner. "You remember what our chapter said last night, 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler consider diligently what is before thee, and put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite.' It's a mistake to want anything, or to seem to want it, in this world. But repose of manner and patience of mind are apt to depend a good deal on being somewhat satisfied beforehand."

Tom could feel clearly enough that his master's words came from

thoughts which were quite behind his little act of household consideration.

There had been some friction earlier in that day in the household in Penman's Row. Grace had detected the youthful London shop-boy in the act of pilfering from her larder, and Grace had been for sending off for the police, and giving the lad "a lesson," which might well leave him with no power to learn anything else but evil for the remainder of his days. Mr. Sandison had entirely vetoed this plan; he had had the boy into his counting-house, and had told him in a few simple words, that this sort of thing must be first punished, and must then cease. He had told him that his act was a shameful one, only that he was young and foolish, and that he had not got to be ashamed of it (the lad was trembling abjectly), so much as to take care that it, or anything of a similar kind, should never happen again.

"If I had had a son of my own he might have done the same, till he knew better," Mr. Sandison had said. "And if he had done so I must have punished him to make him know better, and to show him at once that evil must end in pain sooner or later. Then, and not before, I should have forgiven him, and then I should have trusted him again. So if I am to forgive you I must punish you. Therefore if you wish forgiveness you will ask me to cane you. I give you ten minutes to think about it."

The lad stood mute and shamefaced for about two minutes. Then he went into the shop and brought back a cane, which he put into his master's hand. Mr. Sandison shut the counting-house door upon them both. When the lad came out his face was pale and shining.

Grace was vexed. "No good would come of it," she prophesied. "Fred would only be more cunning in his dishonesty. She wondered her master could soil his hands chastising such trash! It would serve him right if Fred turned on him, and brought some friend to say that he had been unlawfully assaulted and beaten. Only Fred had no friends, and what could one expect of the like o' that? She had told the master from the first that there would be nothing but heartbreak in having one of those children about the place."

Grace could not hear, but she could see the interrogation on Tom's face, as he said aside, half to himself, half to Mr. Sandison:

"Those children! What on earth does she mean?"

"Why, didn't you know Fred was an illegitimate child," she snarled, "a workhouse foundling, the very worst sort of a bad kind?"

Tom reflected for a moment. He had learned terrible facts of human life since he had lived in London. He had wondered sometimes how he could bear to go quietly to his peaceful bed while he knew of the tragedies and horrors being enacted within a stone's throw of Penman's Row.

"Isn't all that way of thinking awfully cruel?" he said to Mr. Sandison in a low voice. "Is it not awfully *unjust*?" he added emphatically, as if the sum of all evil was in that word. "And how it seems wrought into public opinion, into its common phraseology even! Why should the very brand of shame be put on the one who did not win it for himself? Why should we say that such a one is

an illegitimate child? Should we not say rather that he had the misfortune to have illegitimate parents?"

Mr. Sandison did not answer. Tom looked up, fearing that his plain speech had been somehow in fault. There was a strange expression on the bookseller's face, a curious, pained, half-smile, such as one might give who had so strained his vision in watching for something, that when it came in sight he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Tom," he said, slowly, "did your father ever tell you anything about me?"

"No, sir," answered Tom in some surprise, "except what friends you both were," he added ingenuously.

"Thank you, Tom," said Mr. Sandison after a moment's pause. "Now go; it is time that you started for your visit to Ormolu Square."

As Tom passed out of the house, after he had made his simple toilet, he saw his master standing at the dining-room window. He had opened it, and having collected a little handful of crumbs from the bread-basket, he was spreading these on the sill. There were a few sparrows who lived among the eaves of the dismal yard.

CHAPTER X.

IN ORMOLU SQUARE.

ORMOLU SQUARE was a big block of pretentious buildings of the kind which at that time were being rapidly erected in what had hitherto been a quiet, old-world suburb. Since then, they have trampled it out of existence, nothing remaining now even to tell its story, save here and there, a rather dilapidated ornamental cottage, on which evidently nothing is spent for repairs, and which is only lingering on a respited existence till somebody comes of age. But at the time of Tom Ollison's first visit to the Branders, the locality was still full of stately houses, mellowed by age, and set behind gardens as prim and as quaint as the garden of Stockley Mill and scarcely less luxuriant, while a pleasant rustic flavor hung about the dairies and market-gardens with which the place then abounded.

Tom had been informed that he might rely on Robert's being in Ormolu Square before him, because that thriving young gentleman would accompany his principal home from the office. He often did so. There could be no doubt that he was a great favorite with Mr. Brander, of whose views concerning him and his future he had not formed a very mistaken estimate, though probably that gentleman would have been startled to find that another mind could give such definiteness to thoughts which lay dim and nebulous as dreams in his own. There was another reason for the grace Robert had found in his employer's eyes, which would not have been so flattering to that ambitious youth. This was, that Mr. Brander felt thoroughly at ease with him. He could think aloud with Robert Sinclair. There were reasons why it was not with everybody that he could do this with comfort to himself. There were men who admired his "sharpness" and envied his success, who he knew

would have been ready with sneer and ridicule to detect him in the lapses of phrase or manner which are held to betray the self-made man, when they are observed in one, though they may pass unnoticed or with indulgence if displayed by a boor of long descent. There were other men who he knew honored his unflagging industry and perseverance, who would have turned with disgust from some unguarded admission of the principles and the objects on which and toward which he worked. There were others—his own head clerk was one—who, while ready enough to abet him in all his mercenary schemes, had yet a singular and cynical knack of turning them inside out and making painfully manifest their seamy side, which he would willingly have ignored.

Robert had none of these disadvantages. While his own manners were quiet and agreeable—thanks to his father's teaching and his mother's training—he had yet lived among simple folk, and occasional slips on his part in phrases or etiquette set Mr. Brander at ease concerning those solecisms, on which the comments of his own wife and daughter kept him forever sore. Again, very different as were his views of morality from those in which the young man had been reared, they clearly never startled Robert; he gave them a moment's reflection and adopted them as if they had been his own from his birth. And lastly, he never disturbed his patron in that belief in his own generosity and good-nature in which Mr. Brander delighted to hug himself.

Twenty times a day did the stock-broker say to himself that "that boy was born to get on." Sometimes he said so—not to himself. Such prophecies have a tendency to self-fulfillment. They gave prestige: they influence the opinions and the actions of others. The head clerk regarded Robert Sinclair with a half-suspicious interest: the other office myrmidons were deferent. Everybody inferred that his "people" had "placed him" with Mr. Brander: Robert took care not to disturb such an inference. And yet had the truth been known, it might have almost been to his advantage; for people believed in Mr. Brander's investments, they always turned out so well for himself, and nobody would have suspected him of investing kindness without very good reasons of his own!

The door of the house in Ormulu Square was opened by a man-servant, who, if he was not too stolid to notice anything, must have wondered to see the swift fading of a smile on Tom's face; for he had expected to be admitted by Kirsty Mail. He had never dreamed of men-servants, and had felt sure that among the women she would have been on the watch to do this courtesy to her fellow-islander.

He was led up the stone staircase and ushered into the great drawing-room, big, and bright, and perplexing with mirrors on every side. Mr. Brander met him with a cordial hand-shake, though perhaps there was not the best of breeding in his remark that "this is rather different from where we met first, isn't it?" He presented him to Mrs. Brander, and to Etta (who made a feint as of having never seen him before), to a young man whom he called Captain Carson, and he finished off by saying jovially that he did not suppose he needed to be introduced to Robert. Then he said, with a sudden change to fretful impatience, "When will dinner be ready?" This made Tom

turn hot all over, as if he had kept the family waiting, though he knew that according to his own watch and to all the clocks which he had passed on the way that he was on the early side of punctuality. Fortunately it was not many minutes before the man-servant announced that "dinner was on the table," and the whole party adjourned in formal procession to the dining-room.

This room was as big and bright as the other, only its walls were more subdued in color, and instead of the dazzling mirrors they were hung with battle-pieces in oil, and with two full-length portraits of the master and mistress of the house. The artist had "done his best" for them both, but there was nothing in either face to balance the wonderful technical dexterity he had thrown into Mr. Brander's dress-coat and Mrs. Brander's brocaded train, and into other points which should have been mere accessories to the human interest. Probably the lady had been a pretty girl in the days when her husband had been a good-looking young fellow; but in middle life, when faces ought to grow grand as the gentle processes of time develop the invisible but indelible record of the years that are past, she was only paltry and pretty, as he was proud and petulant.

Mr. Brander saw Tom's eyes rest on these pictures.

"Ah, you know who those are, I see," he said. "Pretty good, I reckon, aren't they?—and so they should be for the money they cost. Three hundred pounds a-piece, not a penny less, though I let him exhibit 'em in the gallery, which ought to have done him good, for a lot of my friends saw them there, and it set them up to get their portraits taken too. Advertisement is the soul of trade. But he seems to think the obligation was on my side in that matter, too."

"Exhibition in that gallery is like the hall-mark on jewelry," observed Captain Carson with a drawl of perfect indifference, as if his remark was quite spontaneous and in response to nothing. "When you come to sell those pictures, the fact of their exhibition there will increase your chances of getting back some of your money."

"So I was given to understand," said Mr. Brander quite cordially. "Therefore I looked out all the notices of that exhibition in the papers, and whenever the newspaper men gave a good word to our portraits, I cut out the paragraph. They are all pasted together, and stuck on the back of the picture frames, under a strip of horn to preserve 'em, and then they are sure to be to the fore when they're wanted. There were a fair number of good notices. I know two or three newspaper men. They spoke particularly well of Mrs. Brander's dress, and of the table cover on which my hand is resting."

"My friends do not think that my portrait flatters me," said Mrs. Brander, in a thin, acid voice.

"It does not do you justice," answered Robert Sinclair.

"It looks much too old. I should take the lady in the picture to be fully forty years of age," observed Captain Carson, with the slightest perceptible elevation of his eyebrows. "And it was painted two years ago, was it not?"

Mrs. Brander knew she was over forty five, though her hair and her dress were of the same fashion as her daughter's. She gave her head a little deprecatory shake, and simpered, "Ah! Captain Carson."

"But portraits never are a good investment, do what you will," remarked Mr. Brander, sadly.

"One doesn't think of them in that light," hazarded Tom. "Who would ever think of selling them?"

"Pictures will change hands, in the course of a few hundreds of years," said the captain imperturbably. "Just as even family Bibles and wedding-rings are to be found in pawnbrokers' shops."

"Well, I suppose the artist's name—(what was it, again, Etta? it's always slipping my memory)—will stand for something." Mr. Brander consoled himself.

The captain put up his eyeglass and took a leisurely survey of the works of art. "One wonders how they would be described in a catalogue of sale—weird idea, isn't it?"

"They were called 'Portrait of Mr. Brander,' and 'Portrait of Mrs. Brander,' in the exhibition catalogue," said the master of the house. "I hear lots of people were asking who we were."

"'Mr. and Mrs. Brander' would not do in a catalogue of sale," pursued the captain, quite serenely.

"'Portrait of a lady,' and 'of a gentleman,'" suggested Mrs. Brander. "I've seen many old pictures described so."

"Ah, especially Vandyck's," said the captain. "There's nothing else to be said about most of his. But in this case, I doubt if the description would be characteristic enough. What would you say to 'Full dress costumes of the Victorian era'? That would give them antiquarian value, don't you see?"

"The very thing!" cried the unconscious stock-broker. "They might not get treated as portraits at all. That was clever of you, captain. Perhaps I sha'n't have invested badly after all."

Then conversation flagged a little, which was small wonder, for between gigantic exotic plants and massive pieces of silver none of the diners had a perfectly unobscured view of the others. The plate on the table was perfectly oppressive, everything was plate. There were several courses, and Mr. Brander did not scruple to recommend sundry dishes on the score of their cost and rarity, telling his guests they could not get such things every day—not even Captain Carson at his club. The dinner rather puzzled Tom; nearly all the viands which he knew at all were of a kind that he had seen in Penman's Row months before, and which Grace had since pronounced to be "out of season." Though he was certainly becoming accustomed to many strange varieties of life and fashion, he did not yet distinctly realize that the locomotive power of many ships and the skill and strength of scores of captains and hundreds of seamen, the capital of many traders, and the labor of numberless laborers are regularly wasted in nothing more productive to the general good than the furnishing of summer fruits in midwinter and winter viands at midsummer.

"Have you heard news from Shelland lately, Mr. Ollison?" asked Mr. Brander, sipping his sixth glass of wine.

"I heard from my father last week, sir," Tom answered.

"When did you hear, Sinclair?" asked the stock-broker of Robert.

"This morning," replied Robert.

"No news in particular?" questioned Mr. Brander again, with the self-satisfied smile of one who is reserving a *bonne bouche*.

"Nothing at all—the letter was only from my mother," said Robert, easily.

"I hope they are quite well at Quodda," inquired Tom.

"Oh, yes," returned Robert, "all quite well. At least, my father has been rather poorly."

"I'm sorry for that," observed Mr. Brander, evidently absorbed with something apart; "perhaps that accounts for her not telling you the news."

"Oh, it is evidently nothing, for my mother is easily alarmed, but clearly she is not anxious in this case," said Robert. "But what is the news, if we may ask, sir?"

"That there have been whales in Wallness Voe," said the stock-broker, looking round with a beaming face. "I had the telegram concerning it after I came home from office, just while I was dressing for dinner."

"What's the significance of that?" asked Mrs. Brander, who had had too long an experience of her husband to doubt that anything which pleased him must have some very solid basis.

Less experienced Etta said aside to the captain, "Horrid things! They'll make the place smell for miles. The castle will be unendurable." She liked to mention the castle to the captain, and she liked best of all to mention it with depreciation.

"What's the significance of it?" echoed Mr. Brander. "Why, as it was a large shoal and blubber is up in the market just now, it will bring me in a round £300 or so, not a penny less, without a bit of trouble or risk on my part. That's the way to make money, isn't it, young gentlemen?"

"Jolly," ejaculated the captain. Robert Sinclair murmured assenting admiration. For once, it was Tom who was absorbed in mental calculation. He knew well enough about these matters. If Mr. Brander reckoned on receiving £300, that meant that the shoal caught had not been worth less than £900, since according to island use and wont, "the proprietor of the land adjoining the shore where whales are stranded obtains a third of the proceeds, while two-thirds are divided among the captors." Tom could easily guess that not less than a hundred men would have been engaged in capturing these monsters of the deep, to say nothing of half-grown lads. The share, therefore, of those who had encountered all the risk and toil of the adventure would be somewhere about £5 a piece. And Tom, who knew most of the islands well, gave thought to many a humble home about Wallness, where, during the ensuing winter, this moderate windfall would make all the difference between need and debt, and sufficiency and peace.

"It's an odd thing is luck!" mused Mr. Brander. "This hasn't happened at Wallness for over thirty years. If poor old Leisk (that was the late laird of Wallness and St. Ola) had only been able to hold on one more year, this would have fallen to him instead of to me. Providence seems to fight against some men and for others. Luck's a queer thing, but I do seem to have it."

It never occurs to some people to doubt that providence must hold the same ideas about fortunes that they hold themselves. Mr. Brander spoke modestly, as if he didn't want to claim too much credit for himself. The Psalmist says that when we do good for

ourselves others speak well of us; he might have added, for it is equally true, that when good—or what we call good—happens to us, few of us can help thinking well of ourselves! There is a true hit at poor human nature in the old nursery rhyme—

“ Little Jack Horner sat in a corner
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb and pulled out a plum,
And cried, ‘What a good boy am I!’ ”

“ At the same time,” mused Mr. Brander, “ nothing of the sort is as profitable nowadays as it used to be. In old Leisk’s father’s time the laird got half the value of a shoal. At that rate, I should have got £450 to-day instead of £300.”

“ Oh, but the common people are coming to the front now,” said Mrs. Brander, with a fine scorn. “ They are to have everything, whether they know how to use it or not.” Then after a moment’s pause, she added, “ I think you must indulge Etta in the fancy ball she was begging for the other day. You can’t call it an extravagance when you have just had a pretty little windfall like this.”

“ Oh, Etta shall have her treat. I’ll give it all over to the ladies,” said the stock-broker, who liked to parade his domestic indulgence. “ I sha’n’t be a ruined man yet awhile.”

“ You said you were last week,” observed his wife. There was often much badinage of this sort in the family.

“ Ah, that was when I thought Government was going to play so false as to agree to a treaty which would let the New Atlantan Federation shake off the loan their abdicated king got from us. Not that they would have ruined me, only if once any government begins fool’s play of the sort, one doesn’t know where it will stop. Capital doesn’t want anything to do with sentiment, it only wants interest and security.”

“ The New Atlantan people are reduced to terrible straits by the taxation imposed on them by their late rulers,” Tom observed, quietly. The newspapers had been full of the slow starvation and subtle pestilence which were breaking the heart and decimating the ranks of the hard-working and law-abiding peasantry of a remote country. There was a fund for their relief in the city even now. Tom and Mr. Sandison had talked over the matter. Mr. Sandison’s eyes had gleamed, and his words had been fierce. Tom had innocently suggested a contribution to this fund, as a relief for his feelings. But Mr. Sandison had said bitterly, that no money of his should be filtered through the blood and tears of the oppressed, back into the pockets of idle usurers of his own race—that to give money to the suffering Atlantans was only to send it by a round-about way to the Atlantan bondholders. “ Then must the poor people be left to perish?” Tom had asked, sorrowfully. “ If they perish, in making manifest an evil, and bringing it one step nearer to its end, they have not lived and died in vain,” the bookseller had retorted. And then he had relapsed into gloomy silence. And he never told Tom that by the next mail he wrote out to an official in New Atlanta, and bade him search among the orphans made so by the famine, and pick out the most promising boy, and send him to England, to be educated at his expense.

Mr. Brander's face darkened at Tom's remark about the Atlantan destitution, and Robert Sinclair said glibly:

"There is a great deal of exaggeration in those newspaper reports, and they do much harm."

"Ay, that's just it," rejoined Mr. Brander readily. "The New Atlantans are just a set of idle beggars. Talk about toiling lives! I don't believe one in a million of them does as much work as I do. There was no talk about destitution when they wanted to take our money; but only when we want our interest. We are not asking for our capital, mind, only for its interest. Where would they have been without it if they are so poor with it? What has become of it all?"

"It was made away with by the king and the court," pleaded Tom. "The people who have got to pay the interest have never benefited by one farthing of the capital; I don't suppose in such a country as that is, that they even knew it was being borrowed. They only knew they had more and more taxes to pay. Don't you think all those who have money to lend, should take care what is to be done with it, or at least ascertain that those from whom they mean to exact repayment are anxious for the loan?"

"The Atlantans should not have had a king for whom they did not mean to be responsible," decided Mr. Brander.

"They did not want him," said Tom. "We know he was forced upon them by a foreign power which was too strong for them to resist at the time. They were always trying to get rid of him. They have succeeded at last."

"And you'll see they won't be a bit better off," growled the stock-broker.

"They can not be while they groan under the burdens he has left behind him," said Tom.

"And I suppose we are to lift off their burdens, at our own expense?" laughed Mr. Brander. "Very fine, young man! You haven't any Atlantan bonds, that's very clear. No, no, business is business and charity is charity. I'm not willing to give up my own, but I'm willing to do anything that's right and reasonable. I wrote a check for fifty pounds for the Atlantan fund only yesterday. That's the sort of sympathy I have. Put 'em on their legs again, says I, and let 'em pay their debts." (Tom thought of Mr. Sandison's words.) "Have you given your mite yet, young man, as you're so fond of 'em?" And Mr. Brander laughed heartily, and felt that he had covered young Ollison with confusion.

"They are a set of mere savages," observed young Carson. He had been abroad with his regiment once or twice, and knew exactly as much of the populations among whom he had stayed a few weeks, as a foreigner would, who made a short visit to London, and had occasion to give occasional orders to a few waiters and shoe-blacks. "Nobody who has not lived among them can realize the difference between them and ourselves."

"Ah! well," said Mr. Brander, relapsing into his favorite tone of philosophic toleration, "we must not crow too loud. We have not all been such great shakes ourselves for so long, but that they may soon overtake us. Why, there's been things done in the British Isles not so very long ago, that make one's blood run cold to think of.

Think o' the Cornish wreckers! Heartless wretches, misleading men on to rocks, and snatching their goods from them when they were drowning, and killing 'em if they didn't drown fast enough. I don't know if they ever did that exactly in Shetland," he went on, turning to Robert. "But it's a common fact that there they were very reluctant to save drowning men."

"They say there's a lingering feeling of that sort to this day in some parts," said Robert—"remote parts, of course."

Mr. Brander shook his head lugubriously. "That's where it is," he said, "that we get led into such mistakes by comparing these people with ourselves. It's quite natural that everything should be different with them; they would be no more able to appreciate our houses and our comforts than our ideas of morality and mercy."

Tom Ollison's Norse blood was on fire. "You should not say what you said about the people nowadays, Sinclair," he said. "At any rate, you should not say it without saying something else. Why don't you tell how twelve Whalsey men three times risked their lives to bring off from a little rock the two poor survivors of the ship 'Pacific'? Why don't you tell of that other shipwreck, when every life was saved by the courage and resources of the islanders, one brave man cheering on the rest, by telling them 'not to think o' the big waves, but aye o' the drowning men?'"

Mr. Brander made no observation on this patriotic little outburst. He only said, "Can anything be more horrid than that story, whose truth I have never heard disputed, about some wrecked mariners, who were very nearly landed on one of the smaller islands, when one of the old fishers warned the others that their winter store of meal would scarcely suffice for themselves, and that what these strangers would require would have to be taken out of their own mouths? Whereupon, after a little debate, the half-perished men were summarily thrust back into the sea."

"Oh! papa!" cried Etta, "don't tell such horrid things!"

"Horrid enough!" said Tom, "and yet, there is something to be pleaded for those poor people—something to be urged in mitigation of their alleged reluctance to save drowning men at all. Think what those drowning men, when saved, must have often proved—pirates of the seas, murderers and ravishers, the Ishmaels of other lands, who probably had taught the islanders many a bitter experience. And as for Mr. Brander's terrible story, let us remember that they stood so near the edge of starvation that it seemed to them a matter of a life for a life—not their own life either, but the life of innocent wife and child."

"I am sure no woman would have wished such a thing to be done for her sake," said Mrs. Brander. "It is against womanly instincts, which are all for mercy and self-sacrifice."

"I don't defend the people. I don't excuse them," cried Tom, feeling how utterly he was misunderstood. "I only want to account for it as justly as it may be. Heroes would not have done such a thing, but whatever we may hope we would do ourselves, we must not be too hard on those who, being sorely tried, do not prove heroic."

Tom and Captain Carson both left the dinner-table when the ladies rose. Mr. Brander poured himself out a glass of brandy and bade

Robert remain with him; he wanted to dictate a business letter, which must be dispatched that night.

Mrs. Brander left Etta to pour out tea from the silver service, which was set forth on the gypsy table, and to exchange sparkling whispers with the captain. She herself sank down on a billowy chair and took possession of Tom.

She asked him where he went to church; she trusted he was not like so many young men, who neglected that duty altogether. She did not seem quite contented when she found that he frequented an obscure chapel in the East End of London, where an aged clergyman had spent a long life in gathering about him a flock of starved and bewildered human sheep and lambs, and now fed them with the plain, practical, spiritual food which was convenient for them; the quiet worker and his quiet work going serenely on amid the noisy rush of common religious and philanthropic fashion, like an oak slowly growing in the midst of tares. Doubts had come to Tom since his arrival in London; problems had started out before his eyes, which the simple creed of his childhood had scarcely sufficed to work out. Peter Sandison himself had lain heavily on the young man's soul, with his unhappy face, his haunting eyes, the strangely soft tones of his voice, his swift straight insight into the heart of the rights and wrongs about him, and his significantly dead silence on those subjects of which Grace had unhesitatingly asserted his unbelief. Tom knew no more of his master's past than he had known on the day when they first met. He knew as little the secret of the locked-up rooms whose doors he passed night and morning, as he did of the mystery between the sealed leaves of the Bible. The youth was living in an atmosphere of doubt; if not of despair, which affects faith as the subtlest argument or the strongest logic can not do. Tom's healthy practicality had alone saved him from succumbing. "I can't do without God," he had said to himself, "nor without feeling that God wants me as much as I want Him. Why, I couldn't even stick to Mr. Sandison, unless I believed something that he doesn't believe—if he doesn't, at least"—for Tom was growing more weary in his acceptance of people's opinions of others' creeds or conduct. So, he had followed that instinct to seek and find its proper nourishment, which surely none will deny to soul of man, when we know the creeping strawberry has it. Faith, he found, revived in the sunshine and cheer and human kindness of Stockley, where he had gone again and again. "I've read somewhere that what's true in the sunshine is also true in the dark," argued Tom, "and that means, too, that the sunshine finds out what is false in the dark. Therefore, let one get into the sunshine as much as one can." And Tom had turned from all mere Christian apologetics, and had persevered in a search after this soul-sunshine, until he found it in the fellowship of that poor little chapel. There was something undeniably real in a gospel which had lifted that congregation, almost to a man, out of the very mire, and had set it on its feet, and kept it straight and cheerful in the teeth of bitter struggles for very life, in which the victory was by no means always against want and woe in their harshest forms. "None of us have died of starvation—yet," said the old clergyman, "but a good many of us have had to go to the workhouse. Well, may be that

stands for the arena, and the wild beasts for the Christians of to-day."

Mrs. Brander heard Tom's account of his fellow-worshippers with a silence which had a something of disapproval about it. She summed up by saying "that it was very interesting," only she wondered Tom had not joined a certain congregation which Tom knew worshiped with a good deal of clamor and sensationalism not very far from Penman's Row; its pastor was such a remarkable person, and had such a power of attracting influential people about him; she supposed there were really more people of wealth and influence in that congregation than in any other in London; it would be really an excellent thing for a young man to belong to that church. Of course, she had the utmost sympathy for what might be called "mission services," but it seemed queer to think of belonging to one: that was quite different! One longed to do good to poor people. She had gone once or twice to the "Refuge for Destitute Strangers," in which a great friend of hers took much interest. But really the people were so very poor and dirty and uncared for, that, with her delicate constitution, she was afraid she might "catch something," and there was Etta to be considered. These people were very hard to reach; one of them had spoken most rudely and cruelly to her great friend only last Christmas-day, though the dear soul had such a sweet spirit that, after the first pang, she tried to pass off the incident as a mere trifle. But one liked to do what one could, and, though she herself could not do much work for anything, she was so fragile, and so over-occupied with social duties—yet she gave her influence on as many committees as possible, and attended a great many meetings. She was just now greatly interested in the formation of a society for Redressing the Wrongs of Russian Priests—she dare say Tom had heard of it, and of the good work it purposed to do.

She had spoken almost in monologue, only broken up by interrogative tones, to which Tom had duly responded. Then she asked him about Shetland; she supposed he had not been home since he left the island. Mr. Brander intended to let Wallness Castle for the summer seasons, it was not likely they would ever go there. Etta's one visit had been quite enough for her. She herself could never consent to run the risks of sea-sickness and rough weather, merely to be buried alive in a wild solitude. Poor old Mr. Leisk had managed his estate himself; it was small wonder he had got involved in difficulties—listening to all the complaints and accepting all the excuses of the people. Mr. Brander was going to manage things through an agent; he could keep the agent up to the mark, and the agent would do the same to the tenants.

Tom scarcely knew how to take all this, so he contented himself by making an inquiry after the well-doing and well-being of Christian Mail.

Mrs. Brander looked puzzled. "Christian Mail!" she repeated doubtfully. "Oh, I know! You mean Jane, the housemaid. To be sure, she comes from Shetland; or is it from Orkney?"

"Kirsty Mail came from Scantness, quite near Clegga, my home," said Tom, a little bewildered in his turn.

"I dare say—it is very likely—of course, I never inquired exact

particulars," replied Mrs. Brander; "and we call her Jane, because Jane is the permanent name for the second housemaid's place. One shifts these girls so often, one could not be always varying the names, too; one could never remember the changes; and some of their names are most unsuitable—quite out of place. Fancy addressing servants as Clementina or Sophia! My first housemaid is always Sarah, the second one Jane; and the cooks are called Watson, and the butler Simpson. They can call the scullery-maid what they please among themselves, as, of course, I never deal with her personally. It is an excellent plan. I would advise every mistress to adopt it."

Tom sat wondering. If permanency was seen to be an excellent thing, would it not be wiser to endeavor to secure its reality, instead of inventing a sham? And surely, judging from his own experience, these poor servant-maids, among the surroundings of Ormolu Square, must find it hard enough to maintain the identity of their honest, industrious selves in their working fathers' homes, even without losing the very name under which they had been reared?

Mrs. Brander suddenly remembered that the little explanation which she had given had been elicited by a question.

"You were asking after Jane," she said. "Well, I'm rather disappointed in her. From all I had heard of the primitive life of the islands, I had hoped that a girl coming from them would not be spoiled in less than two or three years; but I'm afraid that love of dress, and of pleasure, and of idleness is inherent in the lower classes. Really Jane had not been in London for more than a month before she began to assert all the rights that these saucy damsels always claim. She actually had the impertinence to ask me to let her go out for a walk sometimes in the afternoon when her work was done! She said she wanted to see the British Museum and the National Gallery! The very ideal!"

"Kirsty was used to a very out-door life at Scantness," said Tom in excuse, his thoughts flying back to her grandmother's little hovel, with the peat fire on the rude hearth, and the hole in the roof to let out the smoke, but with a glorious prospect of moor and mountain and bay stretching in front of the heavy door, through which the bracing wind from the sea found hospitable welcome. "Town life is very irksome till one gets accustomed to it," he added feelingly.

"I told Jane that she must school herself to her new situation in life," said Mrs. Brander, "but, as she looked pale and dull, I told her she might have her day out once a month, which was more than I had promised for her to her aunt, from whom I engaged her. Then, of course, she has always Sunday evenings. I am sure that is enough change and fresh air for any servant, especially as I believe they generally take a Sunday walk instead of going to church. As for exercise, they can get enough of that in the house if they do their work actively. Jane is inclined to be smart in her dress, too. But, as I insist that a certain uniform is to be worn by my servants while they are doing their duties, I never interfere beyond that. I am afraid all gratitude and loyalty have died out of the class. They think of nothing but the wages and the privileges they can extort from their employers. Things were different once! There was a woman entered my mother's service, forty years ago, at exactly half

the wages I am paying Jane, and she is still in this house to-day. Of course, she has not been fit for much for some time, but she did what she could, and we just maintained the poor old thing out of kindness; but now she is losing her sight, and she really needs somebody to look after her, and I don't now what she will have to do. It is not pleasant to think of her going to the workhouse—she dislikes it so herself—though I am sure she would be well taken care of; but these people have such strange fancies. And they are doing away with all the dear old almshouses, into which influential people used to be able to get old servants. It is really very hard on the poor souls. Do you happen to know of any little fund we could secure for her? I say to Mr. Brander that surely there must be such things, but he is always so busy that he forgets to inquire. I am sure I would be ready to take any trouble in the matter—to canvass anybody anywhere for votes or interest! I think a great deal of consideration is due to old servants.”

“I think old servants are a great nuisance,” said Etta, handing Tom a cup of tea. “They want their own way, and they are always bringing up old stories, and they think they have earned a right to shake their heads over one.”

“I think they are really an anachronism where everything else is young—or is new the proper word?” said the inscrutable Captain Carson; “but they are well enough in their way in dusty old castles, with fusty old coats of arms and musty old charter chests.”

Mr. Brander and Robert did not come up to the drawing-room till it was nearly time for Tom to depart. Notwithstanding the chatty confidence with which the hostess had treated him, her murmured “So glad to have seen you—hope to have the pleasure again,” seemed merely automatic. Etta was rather more cordial in her adieux, and the stock-broker said, with a bluff heartiness that took all offense from the words, that “he hoped he would soon see him again, and that he would have grown wiser by that time.”

The portly man-servant was waiting at the hall door to let Tom out; but as he was passing a shady corridor opening on to the landing a slight figure glided forward, making, however, no sign of greeting.

“Kirsty!” said Tom, “I’m glad to see you before I leave. I was asking after you.”

“That won’t please ’em,” answered Kirsty. “Eh, but it’s good to hear my own name again.”

“I hope you’re getting on nicely, Kirsty,” said Tom, thinking of the report he had heard. “You will find London life very strange, but you will be getting used to it by this time.”

“I’ll never get used to it *here*,” returned Kirsty, emphatically. “An’ I’m going to give warning as soon as it suits me exactly. I know how to look after myself now. I’ve learned that here, that’s one thing, though no thanks to them. And being shut in a box and buried alive suits me no better than it suits Miss Etta. She likes going about and dressing up as well as anybody; and what is good for the goose is good for the gander, as Hannah says.”

“Oh, Kirsty,” said Tom, “don’t begin thinking and talking like that!” (He wondered vaguely who Hannah was.) “Think of your grandmother, and how she’ll like to know of your keeping

your place. If you throw up your situation your money will soon go, and you won't be able to send anything to her. It ought to be your turn sometimes. Your uncle has done a great deal for her for a long time now—and for you too.”

“Everybody must look after number one a bit. I've stayed here more than two years already, and that's a long character for London,” persisted Kirsty. “I'm not going to have all the life ground out of me. I'm young as well as anybody else, and if I don't have my day now I never shall.”

“What better 'day' can there be than one's day's work, and somebody to work for?” asked Tom. Oh, Kirsty, I can't stand here, now, to say much; but take care how you get out of a situation. London is no place for a girl to be adrift in who has no home and no friends in it.”

“Maybe I have some friends,” said Kirsty, with a toss of her head. “I've got my cousin Hannah here. She's come up from Edinburgh.”

“And what is she doing?” asked Tom.

“She's in a place—a very different one from this,” said Kirsty. “She's happy enough, and she'd soon get me one as good.”

“Well, Kirsty,” pleaded Tom, “I can't say anything more, except to beg you to consider your steps before you make them. Why don't you write to your uncle, and get his advice?” He saw Kirsty's head give a stubborn little shake. “And if you do change,” he added, thinking of many a tragic story of want and woe with which even his brief city experience had made him acquainted, “if you do change you'll let me know where you go to? A line will reach me directed to No. 10 Penman's Row. Old neighbors must not altogether lose each other in a crowd, Kirsty.” He wished within himself that old Grace Allan was a woman whose hospitality and interest he might have invoked for the girl. “Good-by, Kirsty,” and he held out his hand to her.

“Good-by, sir, and thank you for speaking friendly to me, sir,” said Kirsty, determined, with strange loyalty, to mark her consciousness of the difference of rank between Mr. Ollison and herself, for the benefit of the Branders' man-servant. “There's some gentry who knows how to speak civil to servants,” she said saucily to that individual as he closed the door behind Tom.

“I thought I'd heard the young gent was in the bookselling and cataloguing trade,” returned the man. He had gathered this from some remarks which had passed between Mr. Brander and Robert after dinner.

“And isn't that as good as the money-selling trade like the master's?” retorted the damsel. “Leastways, it teaches better manners than what we see in this house.”

“Dear me,” observed Mrs. Brander, reclining on her couch in the drawing-room, “do I not hear voices on the stairs? What business have the servants to be discussing there?”

“It's Mr. Ollison's voice surely?” remarked Etta, listening.

“And Kirsty's,” added Robert after a moment's pause. He laughed. “Ollison would be sure to speak to the girl if he saw her, and probably she has taken care to give him a chance of so doing.”

“Dear me, how awkward—and how very improper!” said Mrs.

Brander. The hall door closed, so that the interview had evidently ended.

Robert Sinclair laughed again. "Tom is a fine fellow," he said, "but a little peculiar."

"He seems quite an original," observed Etta. She had been rather attracted to Tom on this occasion. Neither her eyes nor her heart had had noble training, but there was something in the grand outline of Tom's head, and in his frank and friendly bearing, which had not failed to impress her, when she saw them now with the commendation of evening dress and the concomitants of good manners; though they had quite escaped her when she first met him in his rough native tweeds with the cashie slung on his shoulder.

"Very original, doubtless," snarled the stock-broker. Tom fascinated him; but it was a very different thing if Etta began to praise the youth, or, indeed, to notice him. "Very original, doubtless! An original beggar he'll be, if he makes up his mind always to be on the wrong side, as he was invariably to-night. Bother originality, I say! Give me practical common sense!"

And Tom, hurrying through the dark, silent streets, felt very glad that his face was set toward Penman's Row. But when Mr. Sandison greeted his return with "Well, are you glad you went?" Tom answered, "Yes, sir, for I saw a girl in the Branders' service who came from Shetland when I did, and I think she's lonesome, and I think she was pleased to see me."

CHAPTER XI.

THE END OF A QUIET LIFE.

ROBERT SINCLAIR'S report of his home news had been perfectly correct. His mother, in writing to him, had touched but lightly on his father's indisposition—had even spoken of it, as it seemed to him, rather in the past than in the present tense. And what he had said was also quite true, that she was more prone to exaggerate than to slight any evil or danger which seemed to approach those she loved. But it did not seem to occur to him that, in the forecast of such a spirit as hers, any word of the father's suffering reaching the son while he was among strangers, and while he must perforce remain far from his home, would seem to mean for him such unutterable anxiety and agony that she would be almost morbidly scrupulous in her manner of conveying it. She had been through all that anguish herself, banished in her island exile, while her home-ties dropped away. And others had not been so careful and tender over her feelings. She had been repeatedly made to suffer as much over false alarms and doubtful hints, as she did at last over the reality of death. And her one thought was always how to spare others what she herself had suffered.

There were, too, at first some grounds for Robert's idea, that the worst, whether it had been little or much, was already over. But the surprise and shock of Mr. Sinclair's sudden attack of illness had really only given way to the knowledge that such attacks must be expected in the future, and that the one poor chance of his ever regaining enough health to continue his duties in Quodda school lay

in the successful result of a difficult and delicate surgical operation which could scarcely be done with any hope of benefit, except under the special skill and adapted surroundings of a capital city, involving, therefore, all the expense and delay of a sea-journey. There were anxious days and nights in Quodda schoolhouse. The schoolmaster himself tried to make light of his own suffering and danger; but even he could not make light of the possibility of his death leaving his wife and Olive alone in the world—"such a cold world," the poor wife had sobbed once—just once—and then had taken herself severely to task for not being able to put a cheerful face on whatever prospect might lie before them, and so to help to reconcile him to leaving them, if he had to die. "I always did pray to be taken first," she said once to Olive. "But it was not altogether that I did not see it was almost as hard to have to go away safely one's self, and not to know what is to happen to those we love, as it is to be left—harder sometimes, perhaps. Only I felt as if I was such a weak creature I could not bear to be left—while your father has such strong bright faith that staying behind would have been different for him. I dare say it was pure selfishness on my part, and has got to come out of me. You can't think how constantly it has been in my mind, Olive. You know the old superstition about giving 'a wish' when one sees a piebald horse. Of course it is all nonsense—wicked nonsense, perhaps. But ever since I was first married I have always kept that wish ready for such occasions—'May I die before my husband.' I ought to be ashamed of myself. There oughtn't to be a wish about such things, except 'God's will be done.'"

Olive Sinclair's mind and nature were fast developing in the keenly vital atmosphere of sorrow and pain. She was the confidante of both parents. Her father's one shrinking from death was for the parting from her and her mother; but it was only the parting he feared; he had no fear for them or their future.

"Everybody will be kind to you," he said; "I don't think anybody could help being kind to your mother, and they'll be kind to you, too—only I think you are one of the sort who are very soon able to help themselves." (People often said this to Olive, and she never made any denial or protest; but a watchful observer might have seen that a shadow always fell across her face when she heard those words.) "It is in the nature of things that people should be kind to widows and orphans even on what one may call selfish grounds, at least on grounds which are not the highest. In every widow and orphan every man sees what his own wife and child will be, if he is taken; and so he treats them as he would like his own to be treated. Don't you see how reasonable that is, Olive?"

"It is quite reasonable, father," said Olive. "But I am not so sure that many people are reasonable. Why does the Bible have so many injunctions concerning widows and orphans, if it is in the nature of things that people should be kind to them? The Bible seems to speak as if they were too often the victims of extortion and injustice. Perhaps it is different in these days," she added hastily, fearing lest she might be adding a new distress to the invalid. "And, at any rate, daddy dear, mother and I will do very well indeed, if we get from others the kindness you have always given to

widows and orphans." Olive had not been without little private resentments against sundry widows whose grief seemed to be a particular obstacle to their industry, and against certain orphans who had seemed ready to take everything except counsel. But she was glad now, for her father's sake, that if he had erred at all it had been on the softer side. "And mother and I are not going to be widow and orphan yet," the girl added gravely, with a deadly sinking of her heart.

"No, you will certainly not be a widow and an orphan in the sad sense," rejoined the schoolmaster, "for you will have Robert to look after you. Robert is certainly on the highway to fortune, though he may have a steep hill before him. If anything happens to me I dare say he will be able at once to take you both to live with him in London. It could be done cheaply, for it would only do your mother good to work for and look after you both, and you would have the better opportunity for finding out how you could secure your own independence."

Olive said nothing. She had a girl's natural delight in having pride and faith in an only brother. But she had also one of those clear-seeing and sincere souls which cannot perpetrate frauds on themselves, even for their own pleasure. "I don't think Robert writes as often as he might," she had often thought to herself, "nor that his letters are worth as much as they should be. He ought to know what a delight a letter from him is to mother, and how she worries, all to herself, when one doesn't come. And he ought to know what an interest we should all feel in every little detail of his life. If he wrote real, good letters, I should not grudge their coming but seldom, and I don't believe mother would yearn after them so much; as it is, she is always in hopes the next will give her more satisfaction. Such letters as he does write he might write every day without wasting much of his valuable time—though he always is so busy."

And Olive had noticed that during the correspondence which had gone on since her father's illness, Robert had sought as few particulars concerning their situation as he had given concerning his own prosperity. He had written that certainly his father should undergo the operation, and that as soon as possible; he wondered there was any delay in the matter. But he made no inquiry concerning ways and means, and gave no hint of any practical aid it might be in his power to render. Olive knew that her mother had confidently expected such an offer, for Mrs. Sinclair had remarked that when Robert should make it, they might tell him "they could manage for the present, but would rely on his backing up their resources when they failed, and that then they must do as much as they could themselves, and so perhaps spare him altogether." But when the offer did not come, Mrs. Sinclair said nothing.

So a temporary arrangement was made whereby Quodda school was trusted to a substitute, and father, mother and daughter started on their weary pilgrimage toward the South. Olive would have remained behind to spare the scanty means, but that during his bad attacks, always imminent, her father required such constant nursing as to make two attendants necessary. And the schoolmaster said cheerily, "that it was indeed an ill wind that blew nobody good,"

and he should not grudge his pains as they had so evidently secured him his daughter's company. But in Olive's own ear, he whispered that she must have come in any case, for it would never do if her mother should be alone in the event of anything happening!

All the way from Quodda to the sea-port, not one of the sad little party said much concerning the course or the end of their journey, though they all spoke persistently of how the country would be looking on their return, and even, with desperate courage, went so far as to say that they might be detained away much longer than they thought. They were not going further than the Scottish capital, and they wondered if Robert might get a holiday to come North and join them there for their return. "That would set me up again," remarked the schoolmaster, thinking to wile his wife from her fears for him, by this pleasant prospect. The son had been away from home for nearly three years already. "Time always seems to have passed quickly when once it is gone," said the mother, wistfully, thinking how slow the passing days were just then, with a terrible suspense elongating the hours into weeks. "I wish mother would go sound asleep for at least two months," thought Olive, "and only wake when all is well again."

In the schoolmaster's enfeebled condition, they had seen it necessary to plan to break the voyage at each port where the vessel stopped. And when they landed at Kirkwall, Olive, at least, felt quite sure that they would never get any further south. Still even she scarcely looked for the end, or at least, not at once. They had taken thrifty lodgings in a rambling, heavily-built small-chambered old house, in sight of St. Magnus's Cathedral, and there the schoolmaster lay down to rest, and, as it proved, to die. The mother and daughter had already been safely through so many alarms, that when his last attack came on, they prepared for a night of watch and sleeplessness, with alert skill and devotion rather than with absolute fear. The paroxysm of pain and feverishness had passed, and the invalid lay in the heavy slumber from which he had often awakened refreshed and better for the time being. Olive felt her eyes growing heavy, their lids had indeed fallen, when she was aroused by seeing her mother rise with silent swiftness from the chair on which she had been reclining. She bent over the bed. Olive was by her side in a second. Her father was awake, and there was a look on his face which she had never seen before. She had never seen any one die. But she knew at once that this was death.

His eyes were fixed on her mother's face. And yet as he lay there, with that yearning gaze, she felt that he was floating away—away—and would soon be out of sight. He held her mother's hand; they saw rather than heard that he said:

"Have faith, dearest: cheer up."

"I do, I do," said Mrs. Sinclair, quite quietly and firmly now. "Forgive me for having ever disturbed you with my selfish fears. God will make me strong. He will take care of us, and we will take care of each other. Don't fear for us. We will come on quite safely, after you."

He made a little sign to Olive. She put her hand into her mother's, and he folded his over both. They stood so for some minutes. Then Mrs. Sinclair unclasped Olive's fingers, and laid the dead man's

hand gently down. She knelt beside him; her eyes still on his face. Olive turned away. It was not for her to speak to or touch her mother just then. She was in the hands of the great Consoler, whose presence seemed too real to be invisible!

With a true instinct, though it is at variance with all the conventional customs of woe, Olive stole to the window and drew up the blind. The morning light was already in the sky, glowing on the old cathedral, ruddy even in its hoary eld. A bird started from its nest in the eaves and flew past the window with a cheery note. A sunbeam darted into the chamber, it fell athwart her father's face and rested on her mother's head.

Mrs. Sinclair rose calmly. "We must send at once to Robert," she said. "How terrible it will be for him not to have been here! Olive, we must not let him get the blow from a cruel, bare telegram. Let us send the message to young Mr. Ollison, and so let the tidings reach the poor boy by a friend's voice."

CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT SINCLAIR DRIFTS.

ROBERT started off on his long journey to the North, at the earliest possible opportunity after Tom took him the news of his father's death. Tom furthered him in all his preparations in awed silence. Robert himself said very little, except "How sudden it was! it took one quite by surprise, found one quite unprepared." Tom replied that he believed it always did, however long it had been looked for. Robert "wondered if his father himself had expected it, and whether he had made any arrangements, and if so, what they were," adding that there was little arrangement in his power to make. Tom remarked that he knew his own father had made every arrangement, he had told him so himself, and Tom had got him to explain more fully sundry wishes he had expressed.

On hearing this, Robert Sinclair had silently reflected that young Ollison was more acute than some might think—one might have imagined that his feelings were too sensitive to allow him to probe deeply on such subjects. Robert could not dream that the "arrangements" Tom had so carefully sought did not so much concern the prospects of his own heirship as the pensioning of one or two old servants, the final provision for an old horse, and the disposal of the old chattels at Clegga, sacred in the son's eyes because they had surrounded the married life of his dead mother.

"I suppose you'll bring Mrs. Sinclair and Olive back with you, Robert?" Tom had ventured to say. "Perhaps your mother will like to return to Stockley—I should not be surprised at that."

"I can't tell yet what will be done," Robert answered, rather shortly. "Of course, there are so many things to be taken into consideration."

After Tom had seen young Sinclair off in the North train, as for the sake of speed he was to travel as far as possible by rail, Tom went into the underground railway station, to make his own way back to his duties in Penman's Row. He had just missed a train,

and there was scarcely anybody on the platform but himself. As he stood alone there, absorbed in grave reflections, he was startled to hear his own name called, as it almost seemed, from the air, and in a voice, which, though he did not recognize it, had yet an unmistakably familiar ring. As he looked around him in amaze, the call was repeated, accompanied by a light laugh. Hastily carrying his eyes down the platform, it rested on the gleaming colored crystal of the refreshment bar. Behind the counter stood a young woman, with her right hand eagerly held up.

Tom walked rather slowly toward her, wondering what she could want with him, and how she knew his name. The pink and white face set off by a fluff of yellow hair, and a pair of sparkling earrings, seemed quite strange to him. When, however, it brightened into a greeting smile, its identity dawned upon him. This was Kirsty Mail, strangely transformed indeed! Tom knew that she had carried out her intention of leaving Mrs. Brander's service, and also that she had not fulfilled her promise of letting him know what became of her.

"I beg your pardon for the liberty I took, Mr. Ollison," said the girl, as he came up to her. "But it is such a treat to see a Shetland face, and I know you are not too proud to have a good word for an old acquaintance."

Despite the affected humility of the words, Kirsty's tone was pert and her gaze was bold—there was a long distance and a wide experience between this Kirsty, and the demure little maiden who had been Tom's fellow-traveler.

"Well, Kirsty," he said, "I'm glad to see you; but I can't say I'm glad to see you here."

Kirsty laughed hardly. "Miss Chrissie Mail, if you please, Mr. Ollison," she said. "Kirsty is too familiar here. You see we young ladies get on in the world as well as you young gentlemen!"

"Very well, Miss Mail," assented Tom. "So let it be. But what did your uncle think of the change in your course of life?"

"Oh, I suppose you've heard that grannie is gone at last?" Miss Mail asked in return. Mr. Ollison of Clegga had mentioned that fact in one of his letters to his son. "Well," she pursued, "uncle and I had a fall out at that time. He wrote to me that he had had so much extra expense during her illness, that he thought I ought to help a little with her funeral. I told him I couldn't. I really couldn't, Mr. Ollison. I had not a sovereign of my own at the time. And men ought not to expect women to do that kind of thing."

"Why not, Miss Mail?" asked Tom. "Among women's 'rights' have they no right to render love and duty?"

Miss Mail tossed her head. "It's very fine talking," she said. "May be I'd have done it if I could—I reckon I would—but don't I tell you I hadn't a sovereign in the wide world?"

"But ought you not to have had one, and perhaps many more than one?" urged Tom. "Poverty is no excuse, you know, if the poverty itself is inexcusable."

"Uncle said something of that sort," said Kirsty. "It's all very fine, but you can't expect a girl to be always saving and screwing. It's little enough we can earn at the best, and we could scarcely get anything nice if it wasn't given to us, and we often have to spend

some of our own money on our presents, before we can make them of any use to us. Uncle wrote me a scolding letter, and I never answered him, and don't mean to."

"But even if you were obliged to leave the Branders because you were unhappy with them, there were other houses where you might have got service, and have found things more pleasant, Kirsty," pleaded Tom, relapsing into his old habit; "I think it would have been well to bear a great deal rather than to enter the way of life you are in now."

"Oh, well, Mr. Ollison, there are good and bad of all sorts," said Kirsty. "And I had got sick o' domestic service. May be I'd looked at it from the wrong end, but so it was."

"What put it into your head to take up this employment?" asked Tom.

"When my Cousin Hannah came from Edinburgh to London, she got a place at the bar of the Royal Stag," narrated Kirsty, "and I used to go and see her there, and they used to let me be with her in the bar; and then the manager gave me an introduction to our firm here. I'm not defending all Hannah's ways," said the girl, evidently with some repressed recollection in her own mind. "But some has faults of one sort and some of another. One must take folks as one finds 'em; and Hannah's always been kind to me. Somebody must do this sort of thing, and I don't see why they're to be despised. Mrs. Brander was very angry about my going to see Hannah at the Royal Stag. It wasn't respectable and she couldn't allow it, she said; and it was that we split over. I don't see the mighty differ between the likes of me going to visit Hannah serving out the drams and gills over the counter of the Royal Stag, and the mistress and Miss Etta going to visit the family of the great distiller who supplied the gin and brandy to the cellars of the Royal Stag. And that was what they were always very glad to do. I ain't saying a word against the gentleman," added unthanking Kirsty, "for I know he gives a deal to charity, and has rebuilt the parish church. You won't deny that people must have food and drink, Mr. Tom; and so somebody's got to give it 'em."

"Providing for honest human wants is about the most honorable of human service," said Tom. "But what wants do you provide for?" He gave a significant glance over the few plates of uninviting pastry, and then over the goodly array of bottles and casks in the background. "Is the underground railway so very unhealthy," he asked with a sad humor, "that the travelers on it must be so carefully supplied with 'medicine'?"

Kirsty's blue eyes fell—they were still pretty blue eyes, though they were fast becoming bold and vacant.

"You are rather hard on us, Mr. Tom," she pouted. "I'm sure I do my best. There's many a man whom I tell that he ought to be ashamed of himself for coming to me as often as he does—men that I've seen on the platform, at other times, with poor drudges of wives with 'em. And I'm quite sorry for some of the poor young fellows, for I do believe they take a glass just for the sake of having a little friendly chat with somebody!"

"But it is not that you may prevent drunkards from drinking, or youths from forming drinking habits, that you are hired here," said

Tom. "Nor, I think, was it quite for that reason that you took this post."

Kirsty's eyes fell lower—then she raised them in defiance. "No, it wasn't," she answered. "I'd made up my mind to have a bit of fun, and no hard work, and some nice clothes—and so I will—come what may!"

"Has Mrs. Brander learned where you are? Has she ever inquired after you since you left her house?" asked Tom.

Kirsty laughed again, that hard, bitter laugh which he had noticed at the very first. "Not she!" she replied. "She never asked where I was going when she saw my boxes being put on the cab. But what do I care? I hear about her, though. I can hear as much as I like about their house. Wouldn't they be mad if they only knew?"

"How is that?" Tom inquired. But Kirsty only tossed her head significantly, and was at that moment called aside to attend on a customer, whose complimentary badinage seemed to Tom so insulting that he could hardly realize that Kirsty, by choosing to stand where she did, had deprived him of the right to knock down the fellow who dared so to address his old neighbor. "Miss Chrissie," however, was only smiles and graciousness. And Tom waited no longer than to give her the last Shetland news—the tidings of Mr. Sinclair's death, and to hastily exhort her "if ever he could be of service to her," to remember that his address was in Penman's Row.

And while Tom went back to his duties, sorrowfully thinking what a tangle this world is, and how much pitiful excuse there is for the errors and follies of others, and how little safety for ourselves, unless at every step of the way we look up for the guiding of an unseen hand, and down at the path for the footprints of the Master, Robert Sinclair was speeding away to the North, with his mind full of many things.

"I must be prompt and decided," he mused. "My mother is a woman who is always easy to lead, unless her own mind is fully made up. They won't be able to go back to Quodda. There will be a new schoolmaster in the schoolhouse, and I don't know another house into which they could put their heads—they couldn't live in a mere hovel, though of course they will have to cut their coat according to their cloth (and that would be narrow enough!), and my mother would make the best of whatever was needful." So far, he thought, though silently, in words; but there was a reflection beyond, which he left unexpressed, even to himself—a thought that since their poverty might be little beyond destitution, it would be well that they should not endure it in Shetland, where the Branders were almost sure to go, sooner or later. He had not the remotest idea of what Tom had hinted—that the mother and sister should join him in the South and either live with him in London or near him in Stockley. "If only my father had lived a few years longer!" he sighed. "By that time, doubtless, I could easily have done for them everything I should like—without crippling myself. If one has to give away one's first savings, how are they to increase so as to be of real service to one's self? If I managed to spare them thirty or forty pounds a year out of my little salary, how could I ever get on? It would not be the mere pittance which I should sacrifice, it

would be all my prospects of any future wealth. If I could only get on unburdened for a few years, I should be able to give them enough and to spare!"

Oh, how dangerous it is when future generosity looks so easy and delightful, while present duty seems so hard as to be impossible; when we think of what we will do, when certain circumstances have come to pass, and not of what we can do in the existing necessity! And we forget that the changes to which we look forward will be more searching than we contemplate—that when the fortune is made, the friend may be gone beyond mortal reach—that by the time our purse is full, our fingers may have got an inveterate habit of drawing its strings!

When Robert had reached his mother and sister, he found that they had been proceeding, firmly and bravely, with all the matters in hand. They had chosen the father's grave under the shadows of St. Magnus. It seemed to Mrs. Sinclair a kindlier resting-place than the bleak upland graveyard at Quodda would have been. "There are trees here," she said to Olive, looking dreamily at those growing round the ruins of the earl's palace and the bishop's house, and thinking of the ancient avenue in Stockley church, down which she had walked on her wedding morning. They had bought their simple and scant stock of mourning, and were already making it with their own hands.

"You should not have allowed mother to do such a thing, Olive," Robert said, almost angrily. "She is not taking much heed to anything just now, but everybody will think us most cruel and regardless to permit it."

Olive looked up, surprised. "I don't think this is the sort of thing that hurts mother," she said quietly. She herself did not feel the more comforted since her brother's arrival, as she had looked to be. "Somehow, Robert seems outside the circle where the sorrow is," she pondered, "and it seems to me that it is only those who are inside it that can console each other."

By and by, it might have been noticed that what the three debated over together, the mother and daughter rediscussed when alone. Of course, they could not go back to Quodda; they felt that Robert's wish was that they should not return to Shetland. They decided that they would not do so. Robert never asked them whether they would wish to be near him. They said not a word about this to each other. They only said that it might be best if they remained where they were for the present. Living would not be costly in Kirkwall. It would not be a great expense to get a few of the old household gods shipped to them from the more northern island; probably the incoming schoolmaster might take over the others at a valuation. No definite suggestion came from Robert. His hints were always negative.

One or two old friends came from Shetland for the funeral, among them Mr. Ollison from Clegga. They hinted, in their homely, kind way, that they hoped there was "something for the widow." Yes, Robert said, he was thankful to say that his father had made a certain provision by insurance. (He did not say how small it had necessarily been!) And he himself was doing very well, and he hoped soon to be doing better. He added that rather proudly, as if he re-

sented any inquiry; at least, so the old men thought. They had not been unprepared to render a little help, if they could have done so in their own neighborly fashion. "But it is a right spirit in the young man to be so independent," they said to each other. "And it leaves the more neighborly help for such widows as have not such children of their own." And one of the old gentlemen, who at times made little investments in stocks and shares, resolved that for the future he should patronize the office which enjoyed the benefit of Robert's services. "There may not be much profit on my business," said he, "but it will do the young man good with his employers, when they see that his old neighbors have such a good opinion of his principles and abilities."

Robert returned to London, highly satisfied with himself. Everybody had told him what a comfort it was to them, for his mother's sake, to know of his existence. Well, of course, he would do something the moment the insurance money was used up; they must make that last as long as they could, certainly; and by that time, he would know better "where he was." Had he not already made one or two little speculative investments, which, if they turned out well, would at once realize what would have seemed a fortune in his eyes three years ago, but which he now characterized as "a nice little windfall?" (Did he notice how his financial vision was changing?) It would have been wasting his "opportunities" had he failed to make those investments. It would be ruin now to disturb them. No, no; everything would end well for everybody. He had not taken his mother and Olive into his confidence, because women knew nothing about business. They ought to feel they could trust him in any case. And from the first, the world would treat them very differently from what it would if he was not in existence.

And then he fell into a reverie over a true history he had once heard. It was the history of a poor artist, the only son of a gentle but decayed family. His early works had given great promise, which his later ones did not fulfill. People had said he worked too much; that he seemed almost to grudge the necessary appliances for the proper practice of his art, and did not seek the inspiration and culture he might have got from travel and from the masterpieces of other minds; that he seemed not to care to risk rising to the height of his own genius, but was content to toil on level lines, which brought him safe profit. He had been called mercenary and sordid. His mother had spoken of him as if he had sadly disappointed her; it had been discovered that his sisters did not trouble themselves even to go to see his pictures. People had pitied the mother and sisters for their withered hopes, whose fruition might well have lifted them out of the narrow life of elegant leisure and genteel economies into one of affluence and influence. Then the mother and sisters had dropped away, dying not long after each other. Then it had been noticed that the brother's stream of merely saleable work grew slack; that he treated himself to some traveling and to some leisure, the result of which was a picture, which presently made his name. People said that all this was the beneficial consequence of his entering on his mother's little fortune, and one or two got so far as to hint that, under all the circumstances, she might surely have made some self-denying arrangements in his favor during her life-

time. One acquaintance bolder than the rest had ventured to ask, "How much he had inherited?" And the artist had quietly answered, "Only about one hundred and fifty pounds a year, but the sense of security and of relief from constant responsibility was the real blessing," and he had been judged a poor-spirited creature to have had so little courage to fight the battle of life on his own account. And it was only after he was dead, when his one or two bosom friends were at liberty to speak out, that the general public learned that from the very first, those leisurely critical women had been dependent upon him for every morsel of bread they put into their mouths, and that all he had "inherited" had been the cessation of the need for supplying their wants, and of the fear lest he might fail to provide for their future.

"That man was a fool," decided Robert Sinclair. And, perhaps, he was; but there is some folly which is nearly divine, as there is some seeming wisdom which is altogether devilish. It was a pity that true story should have had any existence, so that it could come into Robert Sinclair's mind just then. He did not accept it as any guiding for himself. He was not yet base enough to think that without discretion and reserve on his part, Mrs. Sinclair and Olive might develop into such chill vampires as the artist's family. But the story had its influence nevertheless. The selfishness of those dead women's lives had left its pernicious trail behind them. From every life—nay, from every event in every life—there is distilled an essence—a medicine or a poison to be the blessing or the bane of the lives or the events which follow. And while some have the precious legacy of their life's wine poured out in loving service, and others the strange bequest of their life's wine turned to vinegar by its reservation for themselves, there are yet others who drop a strange and subtle poison, which falling often into the most generous wine poured out by their contemporaries, chills and impoverishes it, and even gives a taint which may prove deadly to some. And if there be woe to those who have lived for themselves alone, and who leave the world poorer and not richer, for their having been in it, surely there must be woe, woe—a thousand times woe!—for those who have so lived that they have made the unselfishness of others seem folly—and have stamped the nobility of self-forgetfulness as mere madness! For the former only lay waste the plains of earth, but the latter poison the well-springs of heaven.

Olive Sinclair went back to Shetland alone to select and carry away such remnants of the old home as she and her mother might venture to keep. The "merchant" at Wallness undertook to convey these in his cart from Quodda to Lerwick, and to ship them to Kirkwall in a little vessel he used for his own trading purposes. He seemed at first to have curious hesitancy about undertaking the business, but in the end he named a charge for it which gave him a very fair profit.

"I would not have taken any money at all if it had been from the old lady and the lassie," he remarked afterward, "but there's the young fellow to the fore, doing so well everybody says, and hand and glove with that Brander of St. Ola's, who is screwing all he can out of us."

Olive paid the money. She thought the charge ample, but she

made no observation, though she could not help remembering many a difficult account which her father had cast, and many a tangled correspondence which he had unraveled in quite a friendly way, for the old merchant in bygone days.

Then she said good-by to all the simple neighbors. The expressions of their sympathy concerning the sad changes in the family, and of their congratulation concerning her brother's future, were alike received rather silently. She had never been very popular in Quodda, though everybody had always thought her clever—far more clever than Robert. "If she had been the boy instead of the girl she would have done wonders," they said to each other, watching the cart as it drove away, with Olive seated behind her household gods; looking, not back at the villagers, but out upon the blue sea and the familiar rocks.

"I don't feel as if I could work for myself," she thought. "But I can work for mother. And I suppose that is the way God always spares one something to give one strength! And if father thought too well of everybody else, why, there's only the more need that I should justify his faith in me."

And then, in their lodging in Kirkwall, the mother and daughter began that sort of life whose story is never fully written. They went out of the temporary furnished lodgings in which Mr. Sinclair had died, but they did not require to leave the house. The landlady, a poor widow herself, found them an empty attic, low-roofed, and queer-cornered, for which she would ask but a humble rent.

"One room will do for us in the meantime," observed Mrs. Sinclair. "Robert will take a holiday to come so far north very soon, and by then we may have got on to something better."

"One room will do for us in the meantime," responded Olive, but she echoed her mother's speech no further.

At first, while Olive was looking for work they had to make some inroad on the insurance money. But that inroad Olive was determined should not long continue. She got a little daily teaching, which brought in a few weekly shillings, barely sufficient to pay for their food. Then she got an evening engagement to keep a tradesman's ledgers; this brought in a monthly stipend which would just meet the rent. Early in the morning, late at night, and in the intervals between her teaching and her book-keeping, she toiled at knitting and at white seam. The gains of such labors were indeed infinitesimal, but they must not be despised, because they were needed. She found out what economy means when it has to be exercised, not in cash but in kind. At Quodda school-house, despite the chronic scarcity of money, there had always been a certain humble affluence; nobody had had to study how much they could afford to eat, or whether they might put another peat on the fire. But now she knew where to draw a line far within the limit of her healthy young appetite, and she learned how to make up a peat fire, not so as to get the most warmth from it, but so as to make it last the longest.

Yet it is only when we get down to these barren places of life that we find how rich their soil really is, if only it be properly developed. Olive began to discover that the midnight moonlight and the ruddy dawn have a secret of their own, which they keep only for those eyes

which rest on their beauty awhile, when hard work is over, or ere hard work begins. She began to feel as if she had private rights in the grand old cathedral on which her little window looked.

"What should we do without St. Magnus, mother?" she would ask cheerily. "How good it was of all those unknown men in the dark ages to rear its beauty for our delight? And I believe they did it all the better, that I don't suppose they thought much of posterity, but rather of the worship of God, and of doing a good day's work for those they loved."

Olive found, too, that when one gets down on a level with the poorest, so that they trust one with the real secrets of their life, one finds that there is a good deal of Spartan endurance and of quiet self-sacrifice still going forward in the world.

In after years Olive Sinclair did not find those days of strain and stress at all bad to remember. She used to say then, that she believed by the time she was an old woman she would be chiefly interesting on account of what she could tell of that period.

But then memory, with its curious alchemy for extracting pleasure from pain, always rejects pain from which pleasure cannot be extracted. The true suffering of those hard days was that, during their course, Olive felt as if she could plant no cheerful hope in any "after years," could foresee nothing but one long course of lonely, ill-requited, unremitting toil, uncheered by sympathy or appreciation. There was no possibility of saving, it was as much as they could do to pay their way, scanty as were their needs; a few evil days would plunge them at once into debt—either to Robert or to somebody—and Olive soon began to feel that it would be almost more galling to accept aid even for her mother from him than from strangers; to think, too, that such a feeling was very unnatural, and that she must be very wicked to indulge in it. And yet why? Must there not ever be a deadly bitterness in taking alms from those whose justice would have saved us from need for them? As for any ambitions of her own, even the laudable one of providing for her own future, for the helpless old age that must come at last after the longest life of toil, Olive soon realized that she must harbor none. "Perhaps Robert will keep me then out of charity," she thought, still not without some bitterness, "and perhaps he will have a wife who will look askance at me for needing help, and will give me an old dress and a moral lecture." And Olive was right enough in her keen judgment of the way of the world, though she blamed herself for the edge of her words. For with those who think that to be lucky and rich is in itself to be meritorious, to be poor from whatever cause or course of events is to be disgraceful, he who like Jack Horner,

"Puts in his thumb and pulls out a plum,
And cries, 'What a good boy am I,'"

is sure to agree with the poet's new style "Northern Farmer,"

"That the poor in a loomp is bad."

At other times, Olive would look bravely forward to the very workhouse itself. "If one has to go there after one has done one's very best, one does not need to blush for one's self, but for the

world," she reflected. These somber meditations were reserved for herself alone; for her mother she had only bright announcements of her latest triumph in the way of earning or sparing.

Letters reached them from Tom Ollison oftener than from Robert Sinclair. Tom had written a frank and friendly letter in response to the telegram which had intrusted him with news of the father's death, and the correspondence had continued since. His epistles were the one breeze from an active prospering outer life, which stirred the two women's monotonous days. Mrs Sinclair rejoiced in the coming of those letters, because they gave her some assurance of her son's welfare, though when Tom's allusions to Robert seemed rather curt and guarded, she often feared lest Tom had seen that he was looking ill or over-worked, and was keeping something back. And so in truth Tom was, but it was not what she dreaded. Little as young Ollison knew how it really was with Mrs. Sinclair and her daughter, he felt an instinctive reluctance to tell them of Robert's social progresses; of the dinner parties he constantly attended, where his dress and appointments were of the most irreproachable; of the little suppers he gave among the young brokers and their more youthful clients, foolish youths of fashion who were fain to hope to meet their extravagances by dabbling a little in speculation, and of whom therefore "something might be made." Tom had been asked to several of these little suppers and had gone—once.

Probably, despite these seeming extravagances, Robert Sinclair's expenditure was not large, it was only made exclusively for what in his eyes was his own benefit. Tom could not understand Robert. His habits seemed steady, he drank little, he held somewhat aloof from the fast talk of the men whom yet he gathered about him—perhaps gaining weight with them by so doing. He made an outward profession of religion. But all his being was absorbed in one thought, that of "getting on." The scramble seemed but to grow fiercer, the nearer he got to the goal of fortune: but then, alas! fortune has no goal—it ever recedes, often only to vanish in thin air at last.

Tom said to Robert more than once, concerning his thoughts, his ways, and his friends, were these true, were those quite upright, were the friends worthy? Robert did not say much in self-defense. He only persisted in the thoughts and the ways, made more friends of the same sort, and saw less of Tom. Life is full of such separations.

Olive marked her mother's rapidly aging face. She noted that her mother spoke less than of old. She would sit in silence for hours now, and her loving manner toward her daughter changed to one of absolutely supplicating clinging. It seemed to Olive sometimes as if her mother was actually asking her pardon for still loving the son, who showed so little love in return!

CHAPTER XIII.

A SECRET HISTORY.

DURING one of the conversations which Robert and Tom had together, soon after the return of the former from the North, young

Sinclair said, rather suddenly, and apropos to nothing which had gone before:

"Tom, do you know anything particular about your Mr. Sandison?"

Tom Ollison looked up at him, with a quick, puzzled glance. The question seemed to have a strangely familiar ring about it—as if he had heard it before—an experience which we have all of us known, and which has given rise to many elaborate theories concerning the action of the dual brain, and to more startling ones about pre-existence. Probably such experiences are generally to be attributed to nothing more than a sudden quickening, by some new combination of circumstances, of some old line of thought and feeling, and our memory is not of the word or action which seems to stir it, but of a recurring mood of our own.

At least, Tom Ollison quickly realized that it was so in the present instance. A minute's reflection convinced him that what he really remembered was his own feeling of conjecture and bewilderment when Mr. Sandison himself had asked:

"Tom, did your father ever tell you anything about me?"

And just as he had answered then, "No, sir, except that he told me what great friends you had always been," so he loyally answered now:

"No, Robert—except that he is very much better than his words—and I have an idea that in this world that is very 'particular,' and, indeed, 'peculiar!'"

"Ah," said Robert, and shook his head, going on mysteriously, "I suppose he does not like it spoken about. Perhaps some rebellion against his destiny accounts for his atheism."

Tom did not ask what "it" was. He always bitterly repented of having confided Grace's assertion to Robert. It was not so much that he yet doubted its truth, in the bald, material sense of a fact. But since those early days he had himself been down into the depths—into depths from which he felt he could never have risen, but for a clinging childlike faith that God was with him even there, and had hold of him even in the dark, and that God knew and believed in Tom Ollison, while Tom Ollison could not know or believe in God! And, suppose Tom Ollison had been still in those depths, would God have grown tired of him and let him drop? Perish the idea! Then, too, in rising out of these depths, Tom had scrambled back to the brink whence he had fallen; that would be no salvation from any Slough of Despond. God had brought him out, like the Psalmist of old, into "a wealthy place," upon the richer soil nearer the Celestial City. Tom could say his creed again, now, firmly and joyfully, feeling, indeed, that he had never believed it before; but then it did not mean to him quite the same which it had meant in the days when he had thought he believed it, and would have argued stoutly in defense of its very words. (The alphabet is not the same to us, after we have learned to read, as it is when we are learning its letters.) Atheism was not now to him the frightful mystery which it is to those who seem to fear that God's existence may be endangered if it should ever be denied by the majority of His children, who can only live and move and have their being in Him as He in them. He now saw man as related to God, in the deepest part of his nature, as he is

in his bodily existence to air and earth and fire and water; and he saw that by them man breathed and fed, and was warmed and refreshed, before he could articulate their names, and even if he was so blind or so idiotic that he could not see or comprehend them. Tom could recognize atheism and infidelity as the spiritual iconoclasts of the world, even as the Judaism and Mohammedanism had been its idol-breakers, emptying shrines of maimed or distorted images, to make way for the living form of the God-man. That memory of his own good father tenderly tending him through the foolish rage of delirium had stood Tom in good stead again and again. God could never disown His children who did not love Him, because they did not know Him, or could not see His face. His other children could only love Him the more for such pain and such patience! And as for Peter Sandison, was there not perpetual prayer in those pathetic eyes of his?—and for what were they ever seeking, if not for God Himself?

Tom Ollison was glad of one thing: that, even in those early days, wherein one is so tempted to repose confidences in those with whom we are already familiar, concerning those who are still strangers, he had never yielded to the temptation to tell Robert of the sealed leaves of the Sandison Bible, or of the strange inoccupancy and desertion of the best rooms of the Sandison house. The latter fact did not seem to have struck Robert, whose brief visits had been quite naturally passed in the dining-room and in his friend's own apartment.

Robert observed that Tom allowed his last remark to pass without response, and he drew an unfavorable inference from it. "Probably Tom was getting "queer" himself. Well, there was really so much free-thought among the members of the learned societies in whose libraries Tom's life work lay, that perhaps such a reputation might be good for him rather than bad; but still it was a pity, considering how Tom had been brought up.

However, Robert said nothing on this subject. Perhaps he was all the more eager to proceed with his news, because Tom manifested so little curiosity.

"Well, of course, you know that Mr. Sandison came from Shetland," he narrated, "and, perhaps, though he was such a friend of your father's, that is all you do know. It is wonderful how much we all take for granted, especially concerning our elders. But when I was in the north this time, the old men who came to my father's funeral, in their natural desire to know all about things in London, let fall expressions which let me know that there was a mystery somewhere, and once I had got as far as that, be sure I lost no time in getting as far as I could go. So you really have not the least idea that Peter Sandison is no Shetlander, except by repute, and that he has no better right to the name he bears?"

"I only know that he and my father were friends from their earliest years, and that one of my first memories is of hearing his name mentioned with respect at Clegga." Tom spoke with a coldness quite foreign to his usual manner. He wished to check Robert's communications, yet he would not absolutely silence him, lest it should seem as if he feared what might be said.

Robert went on, "They say he was brought to the island in a

ship, when he was a baby, and was given in charge of the old couple, who provided him with a name and a starting-point in life. One of the old men said that Peter Sandison had been a very dashing, eager sort of boy, but that a great change came over him after his foster parent's death. It was thought that then he first discovered the secret of his birth."

Tom said nothing. He was silently adjusting this new fact beside many an old one. Robert went on.

"Then they say there was a rumor that he had another terrible come-down in London, years after. They had only a vague story of that, without names or dates, gathered from the reports in home letters of other Shetlanders in the metropolis. They said that he had fallen in love with a young lady, who was supposed to be rather above him in circumstances; not that she had any money of her own, they said, but she was the daughter of some Government pensioner, and she made poor Peter understand that it wouldn't be nice on his part to take her from her genteel home, and turn her into a wife and a general servant all at once. I dare say she made him believe that, for her own part, she was ready with any angelic sacrifice for his sake," laughed Robert, with the manner of one who knows the wiles of the sex—the easy confidence of the serpent charmer, who will not be bitten!

"Well?" said Tom Ollison, with a sharp note of interrogation. Robert Sinclair's mirth jarred and fretted him. As he would tell this story, let him hasten to its end.

"Well," echoed Robert, quite complacently, "that happened which might have been expected to happen. While Peter Sandison was toiling and moiling among his books and catalogues, laying shilling to shilling, and pound to pound, a certain smart fellow, who knew both of the courting couple, dashed into a bold speculation, made his fortune, and carried off the lady's heart. It was only a modern version of the old ballad, don't you know,

"Let him take who has the power,
And let him keep who can!"

They say she made excuses that she was beginning to have doubts about Peter—she thought that some of his views were queer, and that perhaps it was risky to trust herself to a man with so doubtful an origin. But of course one can see what all that was worth. Well, I don't blame her. It is easy to blame people. But we must each do the best for ourselves, and a woman's marriage is always her best or her worst bit of business. She hasn't markets every week."

What could Tom Ollison say? All the true romance of his pure young heart was up in arms against such a defilement and desecration of life's sweetest sanctities. And yet by this time he fully realized that to argue over them with Robert Sinclair would be worse than useless, would only lead to further desecration, like a struggle in a church with one who has insolently spat on its altar steps. And every nerve of his warm, true nature was tingling in sympathy with Peter Sandison. Atheist, was he? If so, then whose was the root of the blame? The beloved disciple had pertinently asked, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen,

how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Was it a grievous perverting of Scripture for Tom to feel that in the very spirit of that question another might be asked, "He who finds no ground for faith in his brother whom he hath seen, how can he have faith in God whom he hath not seen?"

Oh! how glad he was to think that at the very beginning he had not been tempted to swerve from his allegiance to his father's friend, even for that bright, peaceful Stockley life which Robert had held so lightly. But while he pondered, Robert went on again.

"The old fogies told me all this news quite simply—just as they knew it. They could supply no dates, no margin narrower than a decade. Nor did they know the names of this false lady and her successful lover. The beauty of it was that I saw directly that I could supply both. They only gave the other half to a half story I half knew before. But as they never dreamed of that, I got off without any suspicious questionings. Does nothing strike you, Tom? Don't you see through this?"

"No," said Tom stubbornly; "I only hear all you have told me."

"But don't you feel a clew? You must surely have heard something on which this throws a light? Do you know, I should not have been a bit surprised if you had taken the wind out of my sails by telling me you knew all about this long ago. Do you mean to say you cannot give a guess as to the identity of the nameless parties in my tale? Try."

"I am not going to try," said Tom. "I shall know when I am told. Guessing on such subjects is an unjustifiable throwing about of mud, and then some may stick on quite innocent people."

Robert was silent for a few minutes, perhaps only because he was lighting a cigar. Probably it would have been quite impossible for him to trace the line of thought which carried him on to his next remark.

"Have you heard anything of Kirsty Mail since she left the Branders' service?"

For Tom had never told him of his chance encounter with her at the railway refreshment buffet on the day when Robert went to the North. Tom could scarcely have told whether his silence on the subject had been instinctive or intentional. He told him the facts of the case now, as briefly and baldly as possible.

Robert puffed his cigar for a minute. "That girl will come to no good," he decided. "She was one of those who will have their pleasure and their leisure at any cost. If I had told all I knew, she would have been out of the Branders' house long before she was."

"If you thought she was going wrong you should have spoken to somebody," said Tom. "Even Mrs. Brander herself," he added rather faint-heartedly; "though she might have discharged her, might have kept an eye on her, or have interested those in her who would have done so."

Robert shook his head. "Not likely," he observed easily. "And besides, it does not do to mix one's self up with these matters. It isn't understood. If one does so, people think there is something at the bottom of it. And before one knows where one is there is a

mysterious rumor floating about one. And it will turn up some day to do one damage, when and where one least expects it."

"Well, good-by now, Robert," said Tom quite suddenly, unable longer to endure his companion's mental and moral atmosphere. It had never before occurred to him that probably the self-condemned accusers of the sinful woman in the New Testament had barely crept away from the presence of her and her merciful Master before they began to whisper innuendoes against Him whom they had left speaking to her with kindly courtesy. It is scarcely in early youth that we discover that society, like the air, is filled with floating matter, ready to settle everywhere, and to convert wholesomeness into poison. So while we hermetically seal the food we wish to preserve, let us consider the wisdom which directed that the right hand should not know what the left hand did, and which was feign to seal every good deed with secrecy—"See thou tell no man."

That very afternoon Tom availed himself of a leisure hour to go to the railway station, in the hope of seeing Kirsty, and of making some appeal to her better feelings and good sense.

He found another "young lady" at the refreshment buffet. This one had black hair and bold black eyes, with which she stared at him for a full minute before she answered his quiet inquiry after "Miss Mail."

"Miss Mail?" she echoed, "Miss Chrissie?" with a mocking emphasis on the abbreviated name. "Oh! we don't know anything of her here, and don't want to. She's gone—not too soon. She was a bad lot."

Tom felt his face grow hot under the girl's cruel glance.

"She had a cousin, barmaid at the Royal Stag," she went on. "That one took to robbery—at least a man she knew did, a man that had run away from Edinburgh with her, and she was put into the dock with him, only they let her off. I don't say your Miss Chrissie did anything in that style, but she lost her place here through her carrying on, and when the man got his sentence I suppose the two girls went off together. Nobody has heard of 'em since."

Tom turned and went back to Penman's Row. By that time it was twilight; and it seemed to him that at every corner he saw a face and heard a laugh which might have belonged to Kirsty Mail.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT.

AND so for years, while Olive Sinclair-toiled and spared in the old attic in Kirkwall, and while her mother waited and prayed and sealed her yearning maternal love in a gentle silence, the life of the two young men in London advanced steadily up the grooves which each had found for himself. Tom Ollison saw his father several times, but not by his going to Shetland, or by the old gentleman coming up to London; they agreed to break the long journey for each other by meeting at Edinburgh, which spared Tom the sea voyage for which he had little leisure, and saved the father from traveling on "those railway lines" which, despite their smoothness,

he mistrusted far more than the roughest waves of his own North Sea. Once indeed, Tom went to Shetland. He did not stop in Kirkwall, except on his return journey while the vessel in which he journeyed lay in dock to take in passengers and cattle. Mrs. Sinclair and Olive came down to the shore to see him, and to exchange a few friendly words during the brief interval. It pained Tom to see how the schoolmaster's widow had become quite an old lady, with silvery hair smoothed beneath her black bonnet, and with pain and patience writ large on her sweet and mobile face. But what an interesting woman Olive had grown! rather too slight perhaps, but gaunt no longer. What fine lines had come out in her countenance! What a wonderful light there was in her eyes! Tom only wished he could have prolonged his stay. Yet though there was nothing in the neat black garments of mother and daughter to rouse in his masculine unconsciousness any suspicion of the hard life of struggle and privation which they were living, somehow he felt that he would not have much cared to enlarge on Robert's career to them, and that perhaps it was well he was limited to more general information as to the well-being and prosperity of the son and brother. But now that he had seen Olive Sinclair again, he felt he must see more of her, and to his dismay, he found that henceforth her friendly letters were no longer a welcome, temperate pleasure, but a longed-for, passionate delight!

In those years, Tom's life enlarged greatly in many ways. He went abroad more than once, deputed by Mr. Sandison to do work which had been offered to that well-known and respected, "though eccentric" bookseller and bookhunter. He lived a real life in those foreign cities, working amid their workers, and making friends among them. He was more than once at the great book-fair at Leipzig. But he always came back, with an unspoiled heart, into the strange subdued life in Penman's Row, and the hearty, homely sociality of the homely folk among whom he worshiped.

Tom paid occasional visits to the Branders', though the intervals between such visits grew ever longer. He could ill brook to bear the ignorant contempt with which the whole family regarded the simple peasantry of his native island, from whom too, he knew by his father's letters, every penny was being extorted and every right gradually withdrawn, and to whom were extended none of the amenities which once made feudal power a possible form of friendly protection.

There were times when it almost dawned on Etta Brander's darkened perceptions, that about this young man with his "quixotic ideas" there was something finer than about her father and Robert Sinclair. She even got so far once as to think to herself that the world might be a pleasanter world if everybody was like him! But then it was no use to dream of what "might be;" it was clear that the world was full of quite another sort of people, and "it was of no use to be singular." She was inclined to pity Tom a little for the long hours which his work seemed to absorb, and for the nature of his recreations, the long country rambles or boatings on the river, solitary, or with some companion as hard-working as himself—the occasional game of cricket or quoits during his Saturday afternoons at his favorite Stockley. How different all these were from the

gay, exciting diversions—the dances, the polo, the operas and the pigeon-shooting matches without which she felt she could not live! And yet young Mr Ollison never looked bored, as she constantly felt! Why, she even wearied so utterly of the monotony of traveling in Switzerland, that she got her father to push on to the Southern gaming tables that she might snatch the feverish delights of rouge-et-noir. Afterward she always said that she did not wonder that gentlemen enjoyed speculation!

Mrs. Brander did not make much demur over the transformation her daughter worked in the family sphere. She herself had been brought up in the straitest old fashion, not to dance, not to go to a play, not to read a novel. Some forgotten ancestor of hers had rejected these things, perhaps in the days of public Maypoles, of the libertine Wycherley and of the notorious Mrs. Aphra Behn. For generations afterward the family had walked blindly in that ancestor's footsteps, doing right (as far as it was right) wrongly, since they did it not on any principle, but because it was "the custom" of the most select section of the "respectable" society in which they had been content to move in those days. But now things were changed. Mrs. Brander's new friends were "fashionable" and had other standards. So for these she quietly deserted her own. She did not honestly change them, as anybody may change any custom, even in sheer loyalty to the very principle which may underlie it. When she alluded to her changed social tactics, she did not say, "Things are changed," or "My views have changed." She only sighed, "The times are changed," "People think differently nowadays."

She little knew that it was words of hers which put an end, finally, to Tom Ollison's few-and-far-between visits to Ormolu Square.

On that evening, she had first descanted long on the graces and accomplishments of Captain Carson, whom Tom had met there again and again. Long before this, Tom had known that the captain was the heir of the good Squire of Stockley, the unworthy heir, to whose advent into place, the Blacks, and all the other old tenants, looked forward with dislike, and even terror; since the young man's character was of a kind calculated to check and destroy all the good influence of preceding generations, while it had already betrayed himself into the power of eager, mercenary men like Mr. Brander who would put every pressure on their weak and self-indulgent tool to force him to extort from his ancestral acres more rapid and showy gains than golden harvests and rosy orchards, and a race of loyal and honest men. Already strangers had been seen about Stockley, who dropped suspicious hints concerning a big new public-house, a possible distillery, and plenty of speculative building, as facts looming in that future which was only held back by the frail life of one aging man. Tom would have been ready to deduct a good deal of the evil report of the Stockleyites concerning young Carson as due to their fond clinging to a happy old *régime*, and their natural shrinking from a new and doubtful one. But Tom had not been left to form his opinion of the man from these alone. At that solitary supper of Robert's at which Tom had put in appearance, he had heard Carson tell a foul story and crack a vile joke. His name had figured disreputably once or twice in the daily papers, and was sel-

dom omitted from the suggestive chat of society journals. Mr Brander did not disguise his own judgment of the man, especially of late, since the interests of his succession had been mortgaged, as he said, "to the very hilt." Nay, Mrs. Brander herself saw no necessity for disguising her knowledge that "the poor dear captain had been very wild," while she went on to say "what perfect manners he had, and how sweet his disposition seemed, and how she was quite sure his heart was thoroughly good at bottom."

Tom Ollison could not help thinking what different measure was meted to Captain Carson and to Kirsty Mail! But he knew that to draw any such parallel would seem to Mrs. Brander like insanity, and would be regarded by her as a personal insult. So wishing his words to carry some conviction, rather than to merely relieve his own feelings, he only said:

"The more attractive such men as Captain Carson may be, the more pestilential are they in society."

"Oh, now you are uncharitable!" cried the lady, "we must always hope for the best. I don't believe the captain would harm a fly. There are so many temptations for men of rank and wealth that we must not judge them hardly. I believe the captain really aspires after better things. He told me that he finds it a real treat to go sometimes to St. Bevis's church, it is so sweet to hear the trained choir singing in the dim, religious light. There is always hope for a man who is religiously disposed." There she paused for awhile and then asked, "Is it true, as Robert says, that your poor Mr. Sandison is an atheist?"

Tom felt his face flush. Had his sacred, though rash, confidence been thus bandied about?

"Madam," he said, "I never heard Mr. Sandison name God."

"Ah!" sighed the lady. "I feared and foresaw that it would be so. And once it was so different. He thought and spoke a great deal of sacred things. And most reverently, too—or, of course, I should not have allowed it. Only he permitted himself to think too deeply, and to venture to think in new ways. I foresaw how it would end." She sighed again, sentimentally, and then bending over her crewel-work, said, in a lower voice, "He and I were once rather friendly. Poor, dear Peter! Without doubt, he has mentioned that to you, when he has heard of your visits here."

"He never did so, madam," Tom was glad to be able to reply. Tom had been unable to suppress sundry conjectures which Robert's hints had aroused, but he had never given them voice. "He never mentioned that, madam. But when I said I had never heard him name God, I was going on to say, that had I gone into his house a pagan, I am sure I should have asked what God my master served, whose service made him so tender and true in his dealings with all men. Perhaps he has learned, may be, too bitterly, to trust words less and deeds more!"

For many a little secret had Tom discovered to his master's credit, as, for instance, he had come across the hotel bill for that Christmas dinner for the Shands which had aroused Grace's ire (though even now he could not guess that the festivity had been first planned in kindness to himself); and he had discovered that the wheel and the Shetland prints had been bought to give the old attic a homely look

for his eye. And was he going to discuss the mute agonies of the noble soul which haunted Peter Sandison's pathetic eyes, with this shallow dame, who fancied she had faith because she did not know that faith is of the heart and of the life, and not of the lip? No, never. And from that day he never returned to Ormolu Square.

Etta Brander and Robert Sinclair had been long openly engaged, and their approaching marriage was even being discussed by this time. Everybody regarded Robert as one of "the most rising young men in the city." He had made one or two very lucky hits. But life was a hard and constant strain upon him, being, in one of its aspects, a gambling game, in which at any time much of the luck might set against him; on the other, a perpetual struggle to keep his resources up to the ever-rising water-mark of his ambitions, and the needs which grew out of them. People told Etta that she was "a very fortunate girl," and Etta grew quite satisfied that to consult high art authorities on the furniture of one's future home, and to invent æsthetic novelties for one's trousseau, was vastly better than any idyllic love-in-a-cottage, though somehow all the poets and the painters seemed to find the latter the better subject whereon to exercise their gifts, and she found it very nice to buy pretty pictures of people whom in real life she would only have pitied and patronized. For her, there were few lovers' confidences in the gloaming, few lovers' roamings in forest or on sea-shore, but she saw quite as much of Robert as she wished at the balls and dinner parties to which they were both invited. Etta's own ambitions were growing daily, and as she knew that "business" meant means to gratify them, she never grudged to find "business" her very successful rival.

"Etta," said one of her friends to her once, "at one time, I half thought you were in love with that naughty Captain Carson?"

"Perhaps I was," Etta calmly admitted. "I think I liked him better than I ever liked any other man."

"And yet—" said the friend significantly.

"And yet I shall marry Robert Sinclair," Etta answered; "that is quite a different thing."

Etta had heard little—had asked nothing—about the mother and sister in the far North. "They were living quietly in a cathedral town there," she said. That had a pretty and an aristocratic sound. To do her justice, she knew nothing more. Possibly Robert had encouraged her dislike to the thought of ever visiting those remote islands. Mr. Brander himself had gone to his northern estate several times, and had always returned in a bad temper, saying "he would be glad to wash his hands of the whole concern; it was the worst investment he had ever made, he might as well have acted like an old woman, and put the money into consols!"

It was just before Robert and Etta were married, that one evening, as Mr. Sandison and Tom sat together at supper in the dining-room at Penman's Row, Grace came in and announced, in her very sourest manner, that "somebody had been a-calling for Mr. Ollison. But when the boy fetched me to her, I told her you weren't in, and I didn't know when you would be in." Seeing Tom's reproachful expression Grace went on, "Well, you weren't in at the minute, though I knew you'd be home directly. But she wasn't one of the sort to come about a decent house. I'll warrant she'll come again,

sharp enough, so I thought I'd let you know first, and you can tell me what is to be said to her."

"Who was she?" Tom asked. Old Grace could understand such questions by her eyes, though they did not reach her ears.

"She was a bad one, whoever she was," answered the old woman. "Dressed in tawdry finery, with a fluff of yellow hair and blue eyes, a-crying and all in a fuss. Coming begging, of course, and making you believe she meant to reform!"

"Kirsty Mail, at last!" exclaimed Tom, rising from his chair. "And to think she has been sent away like this!"

Grace could see the young man's agitation. She laughed in her dismal, cavernous way. "Oh, that sort don't kill themselves often," she croaked. "And when so, maybe it's the best thing they can do. I gave her a good piece of my mind."

"Woman!" said Mr. Sandison, "if there is no mercy in your heart, is there no reflection in your bosom which should teach you words and thoughts far different from these? If not, how can God Himself help you?"

There was something awful in the master's tone. It sent a strange thrill through Tom. It was neither loud nor angry, only unutterably piercing and sad. The words could not have reached Grace's deaf ears, scarcely even the voice, yet for the first time since Tom had known her, she quailed visibly. Her sallow face blanched, and as it did so a weird youthfulness swept over it, and a wild light as of fear and defiance flashed in her black eyes. But they could not meet her master's. Without another word, she sidled out of the room, as if from the presence of something which she feared to face, yet on which she dared not turn her back.

Mr. Sandison rose from his seat. "That poor soul, driven away from the door," he said, in low solemn accents (he knew all that Tom knew of the story of Kirsty Mail), "where is she now? and what will be her thoughts of God to-night?"

"Wherever she is, God is with her," said Tom quietly, "and whatever are her thoughts of Him, He has only loving thoughts of her. And surely," he added, with a slow, gentle reverence, "He will marvel if, in a world where he sent His own Son in His own likeness, there are those who will mistake such as Grace Allan for any representative of Him."

Once again, Mr. Sandison threw Tom a quick, bright glance, like one of sudden and happy recognition. He did not say another word, but walked straight from the parlor, upstairs, and into his own room.

Tom did not linger long behind. It struck him that he could no longer say he had never heard Mr. Sandison name God, and that he had now named Him, not as any unbeliever might, but from the standpoint of one who entered into His yearning love, defeated by human hardness, and who suffered, as a son might, to see his father misrepresented and misunderstood in his own family. And it struck Tom, too, that, for the moment, it had not startled him to hear Mr. Sandison speak so, despite the belief he had held for so many years concerning him, and the silence which had confirmed it.

The three bedrooms of the establishment were all on the same highest landing, above the other flats of closed-up rooms. Grace

was in her room already, but all there was darkness and silence. Mr. Sandison was in his; he believed he had closed the door behind him, but the latch had slipped, and it stood slightly ajar. As Tom passed, he saw the master of the house kneeling by his low bedside, his face buried in his hands.

Tom crept by, with a blush on his face for his unintentional intrusion.

In the dead of the night he awoke suddenly. It seemed to him that somebody had passed down stairs. Yet the sound which had penetrated his slumber was scarcely that of a footstep, rather of a hand drawn stealthily along the outer wall, groping in the darkness.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SECRET IN THE BIBLE.

TOM OLLISON'S half-dreamy conjecture had been right. In the middle of the night, Grace Allan, who had never been to bed, left her room, and stole down-stairs to the dining-room.

There was something aroused in her which must be satisfied in one way or another, at any cost. What did Mr. Sandison know about her? Did he know anything? And if so, how had he learned it? *And was there not something to know about himself?* What lay between the sealed fly-leaves of the family Bible?

She determined to risk anything to find that out. She did not hope to do so, and to escape detection in so doing. (She had already tried numberless times to do that!) No; she would be at the secret any how. After she once knew it, whatever it might be, probably Mr. Sandison would think thrice before he put her out of the house for her inquisitiveness, or before he again "cast up" against her what "was none of his business," what he had no right to know, and that, after she had lived "so respectably" for nigh fifty years! It was odd that deaf Grace, who had not heard one of her master's words, had made out a bitter reproach where Tom Ollison had heard only a pathetic appeal!

She went down into the parlor, still groping in the dark, found a candlestick, and got a light.

Then she took the big Bible from its shelf, and laid it on the table.

But somehow, a little hesitation seized her, as if she could not hasten to do what could never be undone. So she left the Bible lying closed, while she cleared the supper-table and tidied the apartment, as she usually did before going upstairs to bed, but had failed to do on the preceding evening.

All this was only the delay of nervous irresolution. It meant no relenting change of mood.

So, at last, she drew a chair to the table, and set down the candle beside her, a little spot of light in the surrounding gloom. Then she opened the Bible, and fumbled at the sealed leaves, with fingers which trembled strangely.

How little do any of us know when and how we shall take the judgment-book of our own lives into our hands, and opening it,

perhaps in pride and malice, to read the sentence of another, shall find instead the simple home-thrust—

“Thou art the man!”

One seal was broken! So cleanly, too, that she almost thought it might be mended unnoticeably, and her heart beat faster with the thought that if she had such good luck with another, she might so repair the damage as to be possessed of “the truth” about her master, without his knowing where she had found it.

But that was not to be. The second seal smashed and fell in fragments. Yet she scarcely noticed that disappointment in the fact that the leaves were now so widely parted that sundry papers fell from them into her lap, and that she could also distinctly see between them!

They were both entirely blank!

The secret then was among those loose papers. Eagerly she turned them over—one or two old letters, and a few dim and yellow cuttings from prints.

Then came a low, terrible, incredulous cry. For one moment the papers fell from her hands, but in another, she was wildly seeking some clew for their arrangement so as to get the whole narrative in its dreaded sequence. Each scrap of paper had a date written upon it, and how instinctively she seemed to know which was the earliest!

This was a bit of old newspaper, thin in texture and weak in type, suggestive of old-fashioned provincial journalism. It was only a short paragraph, and it ran—

“Last week, one evening, a Buchanness fisherman found a baby lying at the foot of the Buller rocks. The child, a boy, had evidently been exposed for some time, as it was in a very suffering condition. The fisherman was directed to it by its cry, which he mistook at first for that of a sea-bird. He carried the poor little waif home to his wife, and, to the credit of their humanity, they have resolved to take charge of it for the present. There is no clew as to those who must have so willfully and cruelly deserted the child. Only a lad reports that, in the early morning of the day when the baby was found, he met a strange woman, walking very fast, in the direction of Ellon. He did not notice anything about her, except that her black shawl was fastened by a silver brooch, formed in a plain hollow circle, which caught his eye through the sun glancing on it as he passed her. His impression is that she was young and not tall.”

(There was just such a silver brooch formed in a plain hollow circle, sticking in the pin-cushion in Grace Allan's bedroom! She had worn it at her throat on the preceding evening.)

This scrap of printed matter had been evidently inclosed in a letter bearing date two or three years later. As Grace hastily scanned its contents, she found this must have been written by the Buchanness fisherman to his sister, married and childless, in Shetland. It set forth that his own wife being dead, and he resolved on going to Newfoundland, he purposed committing to the charge of her and her husband the adopted child of whom he had already written, and whom he was sending to them by trusty hands, along with certain of his savings, which would assist in its maintenance until it could “fend for itself.”

This letter was indorsed in Peter Sandison's handwriting: "Found among the papers of my adopted parents after their death. My first discovery of the truth." And the date was given.

Then came a narrow printed slip with a date not long subsequent. This was only an advertisement offering reward or advantage of some kind to any person coming forward able to give any information whatever which might lead toward the discovery of the antecedents of a male child, found deserted among the rocks of Buchanness, on such a day of such a year, and believed to have been deserted by a woman wearing a black shawl, with a silver circle for a brooch.

This advertisement had apparently elicited one letter—the long and rambling letter of an uneducated person. But it was not too long or too illegible for Grace's patience.

It set forth that, years before, the writer, a seafaring man and a native of Buchanness, having engaged for a voyage from one of the more southern seaports, had been leisurely journeying toward his port by easy stages, stopping with sundry relatives on the road; that he had thus stopped in Ellon; that while there, chancing to look from his bedroom window at a very early hour in the morning, he saw a woman go past carrying a baby in her arms; that he took a good look at her, wondering who she could be, since there was something in her dress and appearance different from those of the women of that neighborhood who were likely to be abroad at such an hour; that she was short in stature, pale and dark, and wore a black shawl; that, of course, he thought no more of the incident, traveled to his port, went his voyage, and never even heard of the baby deserted among the rocks; that many years after, while making purchases in the shop of a nautical instrument maker in London, he had been particularly struck by a woman who appeared to be acting as a working housekeeper in the establishment, because her face seemed familiar to him, though he was utterly unable to fix the memory; he had asked her whether she could help him at all—whether, on her side, she had the least idea of ever having seen him before that, that she had answered decidedly and sourly, "Certainly not;" that he had remained unconvinced, and had even asked one of the shopmen what her name was, and was told she was a Miss Grace Allan, and belonged to London, and was, said the man, such a perfect porcupine of propriety, that she had probably construed the seaman's good-natured question into an insult; that he had thought no more of the matter; that it was only afterward, when returning through Ellon, that in quite a casual way the remembrance of the woman he had seen in the road there flashed on his mind, identifying her with the London housekeeper whose blank denial of all recollection of him was therefore quite truthful, since on the first occasion of his seeing her she had not seen him; that being near Buchanness when the advertisement appeared asking for information concerning the desertion of the child, he then, for the first time, heard the story, already forgotten by all but elderly neighbors; that, with the exception of the black shawl, he could not speak as to what the woman was wearing whom he saw in Ellon, but that he could swear that the instrument-maker's housekeeper wore for a brooch a flat silver circle, because he took special notice of it, think-

ing such would not be an unsuitable design for a gift he was at that time about to make; that he gave all this information for what it was worth, not seeking reward, which indeed he would not take; that it was nothing in itself, yet might lead to something; but that he was bound to say, in conclusion, that the London instrument-maker was since dead, and that his establishment was utterly broken up and scattered.

The only other document was a sheet of foolscap, on which was set forth a list of the places which Grace Allan had filled, between her leaving the instrument-maker's and her coming to Peter Sandison's. Considering the number of the years in this interval, this list was not short. For the increasing acerbity of Grace's temper and the inconvenience of her deafness had made her an unwelcome and awkward inmate of the households which she had entered. She had been indeed a poor old woman, very low down in the world, and with a very gloomy outlook, when, all unexpectedly, the offer of the post of Mr. Sandison's housekeeper had come to her.

She had believed that she quite saw through her new master's acceptance and endurance of her infirmities. He had secrets of his own, which made him quite content to stand aside from the ordinary comforts and amenities of life, secrets perhaps which made it safer for him so to do. From the very first she had asked herself, sourly, "What could he have hidden in those locked-up rooms, which nobody ever entered—ay, which she had never entered yet—after all these years?"

Ah, and she had asked herself also, "What had he got hidden between the sealed-up leaves of the big Bible?"

As the remembrance of that old wonder and suspicion turned round and stung her, the loose papers fluttered from her hand to the floor, leaving in her grasp only that in which they had been folded, and which she had thought at first was but a blank wrapper. She saw now that there was writing upon it. There were but a few words; and how strangely they seemed to dance before her eyes! What was wrong with them, or with her?

They were in Peter Sandison's own handwriting, and they were nothing but a transcript of the texts—

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

"When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up."

She gathered up the papers and put them back between the severed leaves. She had no longer any thought of hiding what she had done. What did that matter now?

She sat there still and silent. The sweet spring dawn was brightening outside; a silver shaft of light stole even to that gloomy parlor.

How well she remembered that red, red dawn over the eastern sea, when she had sped along the desolate roads, amid the treeless, hedgeless fields of dreary Buchan, with her baby at her breast! her one thought, how to put far from her the shame of it, and, above all, the burden of it; for there was none to share it with her. She re-

membered all her thoughts that day, and all that had gone before, as one might remember a story that was told one of another.

Had she ever loved him, that gay, passionate, light-living sailor lad, whom she had promised to marry? No; she could scarcely understand how it had all come about; he was the one man who had ever wooed her, and there had been no principle beneath her tart propriety. But when he sailed away and wrote her word that he would come back and "make all right," she did not doubt him; but even by that time she had said to herself passionately that she had been a fool. Was she to be doomed for a moment's wicked folly to a lifetime of drudgery as the insulted wife of a libertine and a drunkard? Nobody had known her where she was then. They took her for a strange sailor's wife, waiting for her husband. They had only thought she showed little glory in her first-born and little eagerness for her husband's return.

Poor dissipated sailor! His promise to her did seem to have been honest, for he was making straight for the seaport where she waited when a storm rose, and his ship went down with all hands.

She had little grief for him—so little that the strangers about her had never even dreamed that such evil tidings had reached her. She almost felt his death as a relief. The mere sensual passion of a cold nature like hers readily turns to hate and loathing. But her heart was filled with great bitterness, because she was left to bear her penalty alone. Was she with her high respectability which had been her aim, and hitherto her achievement, among her own people, to be dragged down to the lowest depths of ignominy by this nameless child? With such a charge, what could she save from the earnings of service? How could she lift up her head again and speak out her mind?

She could clearly recollect up to that point, but not beyond it. She scarcely knew how her cruel scheme of desertion dawned upon her. She scarcely knew whether she meant the waves to swallow her child. No, no, surely not, or why did she not plunge him therein at once? No, no, she *must* have known that some good people were sure to find him. And when she had fled, and cast no look behind, and had sent back no inquiry, was it only from fear of detection? or was it not also from fear of hearing that evil had befallen her babe? Why, even Hagar had gone away from her darling Ishmael, saying, "Let me not see the death of the child."

Once or twice, in the long, long years since, she had vaguely wondered whether that boy had lived or died. Once, when her way had been very hard—just before Peter Sandison had crossed her path—she had half wondered whether it might not have been well for her to have struggled for his infancy, if, haply so, he might have defended her old age. But it was wonderful how seldom she had ever thought of him at all! The remembrance had never made her pitiful to one forlorn child, nor merciful to one sinful woman. Why should she pity those, when she had not pitied her own? Why should she be merciful to the utter misery of these? Might not they, too, have "kept themselves up," as she had done, at any cost? But the remembrance had revenged itself upon her in a bitter mistrust of all her kind. A self-knowledge, tainted like hers, judged that every life had its secret, and that the secret of every life was of its

own sin. How could such as she realize that the sinful secret of one like her must ever lie a sinless secret on the hearts of many others, and a secret cross over the whole lives of some?

Old Grace Allan sat in the pale morning light, but it was not of these things that she thought. Nay, she thought of nothing. There was only once more a bitter protest against the penalty she had to bear. It seemed to her now, that the penalty from which she had shrunk in her young womanhood had been light indeed, though it still seemed to her "but natural" that she should have struck a deadly blow to escape it. And that it should turn up like this, after all—how hard, how hard, how hard it was! For to Grace's narrow mind this was no simple fulfillment of the everlasting law that, somewhere on some day, sin shall ever find out the sinner, it seemed to her a special Providence, and therefore specially cruel! Was she, after all, to be condemned as a would-be murderess, and a life-long hypocrite? It was not fair! Such measure was not meted out to everybody. She would not bear it! She would escape somewhere, somehow! Futile as she had just proved such efforts to be, she was ready for them again. Experience is such a puzzling teacher! When we do well, and yet fail, she says distinctly, "Try again." When we do badly, and fail, we are apt to catch that echo.

Grace had laid her plans well when she was young and vigorous in mind and body, and they had all come to nothing. Now she had no plans to lay, nothing to start upon except the blind rebellion within her.

She would go away from here; she did not know where she meant to go. She did not know that she forgot to take anything with her, even a bonnet or shawl. She did not notice that she left the Bible lying open on the table, ready to tell its tale. She knew only her own wild determination not to meet the eyes of Peter Sandison. She would have shrunk from them less had her story been new to her son this day. But he had known it all the time; he had never looked at her unknowing of it!

The candle had gone on burning in the wan dawning. It was at the socket now, and when it flickered and went out, that roused her to the consciousness that it was now broad daylight. What was to be done must be done quickly.

She stole from the parlor and crept through the shop. Then, with chill and trembling hands, she unfastened the front door. How heavy the bolts and bars seemed! But they were all undone at last, and the morning air blew freshly on her withered face. She closed the door behind her very gently, lest any noise should penetrate through the house and rouse the sleepers in the far-off bedrooms. And then she went down the street, moving slowly, close by the houses, even drawing her hand along their shutters, as if she would have been glad of some support. If her mind had not been dead to all outside of herself, she would have noticed a woman standing half inside the old-fashioned porch of a neighboring house—a woman who had spent the whole night walking to and fro and in and out of the quiet lanes in the vicinity, terribly fearless of the belated and half-tipsy wanderers who had greeted her with gibe and insult, and meekly obedient to the policeman's gruff behest "to move on." This was a young woman, dressed in thin garments of tawdry finery,

with a fluff of golden hair about her face, like a neglected aureole, and with blue eyes which looked like faded forget-me-nots. It was Kirsty Mail.

When Kirsty saw Grace issue from the door of Mr. Sandison's house she herself but drew back further into the shadow, not wishing to be seen by her who had met her so inhospitably on the previous evening. But when she saw the old woman creep along, with her strangely groping hands, and marked her gray head bare to the morning breeze—for Grace wore not even her cap—then Kirsty felt that something was wrong, and first she peeped from the porch, then she stole after the fugitive.

On and on went Grace, and on went Kirsty after her. It struck Kirsty very soon that the old woman was going she knew not whither. She walked like one blind, and every moment her step became more automatic. "Is she out of her mind?" reflected the younger woman. "Perhaps she is one of those who have fits of insanity, and it may have been a fit coming on, which made her so harsh to me last night. Poor old soul!"

Suddenly the old woman paused, made one more stumbling effort and sank to the ground. Kirsty was by her side in an instant.

The world was waking up by this time. Two or three workmen were hastening to their daily labor, a shopman was taking down his shutters, and a policeman was lounging at a corner, waiting to be relieved from his duty. These all crowded about the two women. They looked rather suspiciously at poor Kirsty; but when she declared that she knew the old lady, that she was the housekeeper at Mr. Sandison's in Penman's Row—they were not so far from that quarter as to be ignorant of the name—and when Grace herself was discovered to be speechless, they found that they could not do better than accept Kirsty's guidance.

So they carried Grace Allan back, staring, wide-eyed, and unresisting, Kirsty following, rendering kindly little attentions. Penman's Row was still empty and silent. The prolonged ringing of the door bell gave the first notice to Mr. Sandison and Tom that something unusual had happened. The men told where and how they had found the stricken woman. While they carried her upstairs to her own room, Mr. Sandison, going into the dining-room to search for some homely restorative, discovered the ravaged Bible. And Kirsty, cowering down beside Tom, sobbed out—

"I missed you last evening, and I didn't think I'd dare to face her again; so I was watching about for a chance of seeing you this morning. It seems just like a Providence. Poor old lady! She makes me think of dear old grannie. I'm glad she was dead before she knew that I— Oh, Master Tom, I've been a wicked woman. D'ye mind that picture you gave me in Lerwick, because I fancied it was like grannie? Well, I'd always kept it, though with its face downward, in my box, because I couldn't a-bear to see it. An' only the other night, Cousin Hannah—her I've been with since I went wrong—got it, and took it out o' the little frame, that she might put in something else, and she tore up the little picture o' the good old wifie at the wheel! An' ever since then it's haunted me! As long as I could keep it at the bottom of the box, out o' sight, it seemed different. But once it was tore up, it's never been out o' my sight.

An' it's been more like grannie than ever. An' I'd come to ask you, Master Tom, if you thought there was anybody who would let me do a little rough work to earn a bit of honest bread, an' I'd promise to keep out o' their sight."

"In the meantime," said Mr. Sandison, as if he had not heard a word that she had said, though he had entered the room and had stood behind her while she was speaking—"in the meantime perhaps you will kindly give a helping hand in this house of trouble and sickness. At present there is no woman here to wait upon—my mother!"

Kirsty gave a low cry of eager obedience and sprung upstairs. Mr. Sandison threw Tom a glance, which emphasized and illuminated his last words. Then he, too, went slowly upstairs. But he did not go straight to the attic. Tom heard him unlocking the closed door, and then he heard him pacing with slow and heavy steps about those long-deserted chambers.

That morning's post brought Tom an elaborate little box containing the wedding-cards and wedding-cake of Robert Sinclair, Esquire, and Miss Henrietta Brander, and in that morning's paper he saw the announcement of their marriage at a fashionable church.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE OPENED DOORS.

THROUGH the day, doctors came and went at Mr. Sandison's summons, but he himself was not visible, and poor Kirsty, coming downstairs on divers errands, was Tom Ollison's only source of information. She reported that "Mrs. Allau had had a stroke," and later on, "that it was little likely she would ever be about again," though, they said, "there was no danger for the present."

In the twilight Mr. Sandison came into the parlor, where Tom was seated rather forlornly. He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, with a strong and yet a half caressing grasp.

"Come with me," he said, "we will have no more secrets in this house. We will let the fresh air blow through every place, as God means it shall, and as it always must, at last."

He led the way upstairs. He opened one of those mysterious doors—no longer locked—and went straight into the room. Seeing that Tom hesitated on the threshold, he turned and said, "Come in, come in."

What little daylight was still lingering outside found now free access to the apartment, for the white blinds, ashen with age, which had hitherto shut out any obtrusive gaze on the part of inquisitive opposite neighbors, were at last drawn up. The windows themselves, too, had evidently been open for some time, but the gentle breezes of a calm spring day had not yet sufficed wholly to dispel the ancient, stagnant atmosphere, and perhaps it was very well that the fading light was merciful to the dimness and dust of years of neglect.

What did Tom see?

Tom saw only what, to a heart which has power to understand

it, is ever the most tragic sight of any—the signs of a hopeful, cheerful, ordinary life, which has been suddenly arrested by some great blow, some awful agony. He saw nothing but a pretty little apartment, prepared with care and taste, and full of those touches which betray a strong human interest. There was a stand filled with flower-pots in the central window, wherein the dead plants stood like skeletons. There were pictures on the walls, beautiful steel engravings—there was one of these standing on a chair, with the hanging cord drawn through its rings, but not yet knotted. This was Landseer's touching presentment of the faithful dog resting its head on its dead master's coffin. Peter Sandison had put it out of his hands, all those years ago, that he might open a letter which was brought to him—a letter whose mercenary falsehood and perfidy had closed those rooms from that day to this, turning the happy home that was to be into the charnel-house of dead hopes that could never be.

“Ay, I have been very foolish,” broke out Peter Sandison. “I need not tell you the tale. I dare say you have heard as much of it as needs be. I am not the first man—and I fear I shall not be the last—who has lost his sight of God and his joy in God's world because—he had happened to fall in love with the wrong woman!”

The sadness and pain of a lifetime were crystallizing, as in true hearts they always do crystallize, sooner or later, into humor. A good deal of heart-break goes to the making of epigram. The human mind throws out its sparks, as metals do, beneath hard blows!

“But do me justice, Tom,” he went on. “I never meant to make a dramatic sensation in closing up these rooms. In the first day of my disappointment I locked them up in sheer disheartenment and bitterness, and then I could not bear to face them again, and deferred doing so, and then there seemed no reason why I should, and then it seemed easiest to let them lie as they were, since the rest of the house amply sufficed my needs. I knew that even if they were never opened in my lifetime, they would tell little to those who would come after me. But what a waste it has been! Somebody ought to have made a home out of those rooms all these years. A house which is hindered from producing a home is as great a wrong to humanity as is a field which is kept from producing food.”

There was silence. Mr. Sandison resumed. “About that poor soul upstairs, Tom, I need not say anything. She never knew that I was her son till she evidently found it out this morning. I was a desolate infant, Tom, as desolate as was poor Fred, the shopboy. And in mature life I sought out my mother, for I could not believe that she had really intended all that had come upon me. I found her poor and helpless, but fenced in by strong barriers from the shame and reproach of her old sin. O Tom, I could not bear that my words should fling it back upon her, that my hand should tear down the barriers of credit and respect behind which she had entrenched herself. I thought if I once had her in my house, that during years and years of close acquaintance, there would come a softer moment—the vaguest expression of some regretful yearning. Ah, Tom!”

The infinite pain in the tone of those last words was his sole ex-

pression of the completeness of his disappointment. Tom said nothing. What was there to be said? The young man's mind went back to poor Grace's early confidences, and to the mingled feelings they had aroused within himself.

"And so I lost God," said Mr. Sandison, in a quiet, even voice. As he spoke, Tom looked up at him, and their eyes met. Perhaps there was some question in those of the younger man. "And so I lost God," Mr. Sandison repeated. "I can not say I ever ceased to believe in Him, but I lost Him. Does a poor child cease to believe in his father, when he misses him in a crowded street, and takes the wrong turning, and goes wailing along among the strangers who give little notice to him or his trouble?"

Tom could not help reflecting how it was those who had been "infidel" in the deepest sense, unfaithful to all the claims of dutiful love and service, who had been the readiest, and the harshest, in calling this man "atheist." O poor Grace Allan! O unhappy Mrs. Brander.

"I had gone rather deeply into theology in my young days," Mr. Sandison went on. "My head had asked many questions, without answers to which my intellect would not rest satisfied. But I found that sort of satisfaction would not serve me here. One can not feed one's heart on abstractions however logical or poetical. It was a Father and a Friend whom I wanted; a Father whose very face would satisfy me—a Friend who would walk with me and take counsel with me over every step of my way."

"These are the longings of all hearts," said Tom gently.

"There seemed no such Father, and no such Friend for me," pursued Mr. Sandison. "And the world I live in seemed as if it could not have been made and managed by such an one. Tom Ollison, what I am about to say I could say to few, but I think you may understand me. I had lost God; I had lost all reflection of Him in the human faces round me—perhaps only because I had looked for Him most where I was least likely to find Him. And then it came into my mind that all I could do was to try to do my utmost to act as I should like to think God would act if He was living—a man in the world to-day."

"'He who willeth to do God's will, he shall know of Christ's teaching,'" quoted Tom, in an undertone.

"Ay!" said Mr. Sandison, fervently. "And it is wonderful how many lights come out in dark places, when one tries to follow that out. The great doubts and agonies of the human heart can not be met by anything but the great facts and experiences of human life. You must have noticed that it is only quite lately that I have taken to reading the Gospels, and have left off going over the Proverbs of Solomon, and nothing but the Proverbs, every night, getting through the whole book once every month? I dare say, after what Grace said, you thought I chose that book as being the most practical, or as some people would call it, the 'worldliest,' in the Bible?"

Tom smiled.

"In a way, I did so," Mr. Sandison conceded. "I knew that you had learned the Scriptures from your youth up, and that nothing in them could be new to you, as mere matter of fact or literature. And I knew, by what I had gone through myself, that you would presently

get interested in all sorts of intellectual problems—about the evidence of miracles, about the precise nature of inspiration, about the puzzle of unfulfilled prophecy, and such like difficulties—all difficulties which our minds must grapple with, according to the lights of our generation—but on which each new generation generally throws new lights, showing the lights of the generations preceding to have been but darkness. I wanted your faith to find instinctively a wider basis, so that fluctuating opinions on any subject might disturb it no more than the rooted tree is disturbed by the summer breeze which lightly stirs its branches. I wanted to bring home to you that Divine wisdom has a strong and sure hand in the conduct of this present life, for that is our best reason for trusting it to lead us through the mists and up the heights. The prophecies of the Proverbs are not unfulfilled; for we see them worked out in weal or woe in our own lives, and in every life within our range!”

“I have felt as you do, sir,” said Tom, “that the most satisfactory answers of the intellect are no help to the doubts of the heart. But I don’t think I could have got help while standing apart, as you seemed to stand, sir.”

“Ah!” cried Mr. Sandison, “there it is! There are some who seem only able to find God by going out into the wilderness; and we may notice that these hermits were generally men of peculiar history and of peculiar character. Nor do I suppose they themselves ever dreamed that their recluse habits had any of the special sanctity which those who admired their final goodness were too ready to attach to them. Those habits were simply a terrible end to those men—an heroic cure for greater loss and evil; and their stories show us that this cure worked by way of healing them enough to make them susceptible to some gentle touch which led them gradually back to as much human fellowship as it was possible for them to bear.” He paused. “Tom,” he said, presently, “you don’t know how much good you did me when you didn’t shun me because of the report you heard. And again, when I found that your faithfulness to your father’s friend could outweigh the charms of the pleasant life at Stockley. And again, by sundry true words you spoke on sundry occasions. Tom, as I looked into your frank young face, I caught again a reflection of the Divine Father and Friend.” Mr. Sandison said this in a slow, dry tone, as if the utterance were difficult. Strong emotion scarcely dares to filter itself through speech, lest speech give way before it.

Tom understood him far too well to breathe a single word. They sat in silence for a long time—till the twilight faded into darkness, and there was nothing but the dull glimmer of a street lamp to dimly reveal the outline of their figures and of the furniture.

Mr. Sandison was the first to break the spell. He rose up, saying cheerfully, “Well, the house is open now. Let God’s breeze blow through it, and God’s sunshine brighten it, and let us watch patiently to see what living seeds they will bear into it, and bring to blossom within it.”

He was speaking, half of the closed-up and desolate rooms, and half of his own closed-up and desolate heart, of which they had been but the result and the type.

That night, before Mr. Sandison went to rest, he stole up to the room where the aged woman lay, in her strange life-in-death.

Grace's room had always been comfortable. Peter Sandison had seen to that from the first. But poor Kirsty's zealous efforts had done much for it during her day's attendance. A liberal fire was glowing on the hearth, for the spring nights were still chilly. Kirsty had got the shop-boy to bring her in some spring flowers—crocuses and daffodils, and these stood in a brown pot on a little table beside the bed. From the bed itself Kirsty had removed the drab coverlet, and had substituted a white counterpane, which she had found in the linen closet to which she had been given free access; and over the foot of the couch she had thrown, for added warmth, a coarse scarlet blanket.

"If the poor thing can't speak and can't hear," said Kirsty, speaking audibly as she went about the room, "then there's the more occasion she should see what's pleasant. And there's the master to consider too, and there's been terrible trouble of some sort. The world's full of trouble, and there's always somebody's wickedness at the bottom of it. I think the master will let me stay and nurse the poor old lady. This house is just a heaven to me. Oh! what a fool I was to think nothing was so good as pleasure and finery; and what a price I've paid for my folly! I wonder if I'll ever want to be bad again! I'm feared I should, if I was in sight o' folks like the Branders, so I suppose that shows I've not really learned a bit of wisdom yet—except it may be that I'd have sense to keep out of the way of such like. How different it might have been if I'd gone to that watch-maker's quiet house in Edinburgh. And what's to become of poor Hannah? When the master said that if I'd stay and do the nursing he'd get somebody for the housework I could not help thinking of her, but I daren't mention her, for she can't be trusted to keep from the drink for two hours together."

When Kirsty saw the master coming into the room, she rose from her low seat by the fire, and passed quietly out.

Mr. Sandison carried in one hand the big Bible, which he had brought up from the dining-room. In the other hand he had an inkstand, and behind his ear there was a pen. He laid the book on the table beside the invalid. He did not look at her as he did so. She gave a deep groan.

He opened the volume, turning to the fly-leaves, between whose severed pages lay the few old papers which that morning had wrought such a havoc in a lifetime's hypocrisy. He took them up, one by one, still not looking toward the bed. He turned away and went toward the fire, taking the seat which Kirsty had vacated. He knew that Grace could see every movement. One by one, in no haste, but with gentlest deliberation, he put those papers on the blazing fire. It swiftly caught them up, and consumed them utterly.

Then he rose, and went back to the open Bible lying on the table. He took the pen, and wrote on the blank fly-leaf, in large, bold characters, "From Peter Sandison to his mother."

Then he turned the book, and held it toward the invalid. She could easily read what was written there, and when she had done so she raised her pitiful eyes, and they met his.

No word could pass between them now. But she fumbled with

her numb hands, and grasped his, and drew it upon her pillow, and kissed it—once, twice.

Peter Sandison bent down and kissed her cheek. There was a moisture on it.

That was all. He summoned Kirsty to resume her watch. And he went away, only waving back his hand before he closed the door.

“Thank God!” he said to himself. “And who knows but this night have come to pass long ago, if I had been wiser? Thank God that He will reveal our sins to us, though He will also blot them out! The truth, at any cost! Love can strike root in nothing else?”

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO ON THE CLIFFS.

LATE in the following summer, Tom Ollison paid another visit to Clegga. He had been longing very much to do so, but the suggestion finally came from Mr. Sandison. (Had he noticed how much more often these Kirkwall letters had arrived since Tom's last visit to the North?)

“I wish you would bring your father back to spend the winter with us, Tom,” he said; “don't you think you could persuade him? You know there are plenty of spare rooms now! I never thought how they were wasted, while they were shut up, but now it seems a terrible waste to think of them open and empty!”

Mr. Sandison did not go very much into those deserted rooms. His life had grown into his parlor and his shop. Still he went into them, determined to lay forever the ghost of the old shrinking. With his own hands he finished hanging the engraving, which he had laid down in his moment of despair nearly a quarter of a century before. With his own hands he threw away the ashen plants which had withered in loneliness, and planted fresh ones whose sweet smell stole through the quiet rooms. He chose none but those with a sweet smell. Mrs. Black sent him roots from Stockley. He even broke his old habits so far as to accompany Tom on a Saturday visit to the Mill—perhaps induced to do so by the constant repetitions of Mrs. Black's pathetic wish “that Mr. Ollison's great friend should for once see the old place as it always had been—since nobody knew what changes might be coming.”

For the old Squire of Stockley was at last gathered to his fathers, and the distant heir, the Branders' friend, Captain Carson, reigned in his stead, and whenever Mrs. Black wrote to Tom, her letters were full of lamentation over the demoralizing innovations which had already begun. Kirsty Mail was standing by the breakfast table arranging the aged invalid's breakfast-tray, when Tom read one of those letters aloud to Mr. Sandison. What made Kirsty's color come and go so fast? What made the knife and fork fall from her hand with a rattle? Ah, there is some name at the beginning of every story which ends with a woman's blighted life! There is some name at which every wild woman we pass in the glaring promenade or in the yellow gaslight, would either turn aside and weep, or start up and curse!

And Kirsty Mail went apart and wept, wept for her own withered life, and wept, too, for him who had misled and destroyed her. "There was something nice and good in him, she was sure," she wailed to herself, with a pathetic faith very different from Mrs. Brander's easy condonation of the sins of one who was "so pleasant in society." Is not the hold which God keeps on every soul best typified by the clinging human love which reaches each from somewhere and will not let them go? And if there was any such love for Captain Carson, it dwelt in the heart of the woman he had ruined. Yet Kirsty would have been ready to own that it was not this love which had led her downward, but rather her own vanity and idleness; that she had not loved this man in those days, but had merely enjoyed his fair speeches and pretty gifts—that it was only lately, since her own sin had found her out, and her own steps had turned back to the Father's house, that her heart had yearned over the sinner whose sin had not yet found him out, and who was still in the far country, a very citizen thereof, dealing out the swine's husks to others, and not yet proving their unsatisfyingness for himself.

And so Tom went off to the far North. But he had first written to his father to ask whether he should not stop at Kirkwall and try to induce Mrs. Sinclair and Olive to accompany him to Shetland and be their guests at Olegga, and take another look at the old places and the old faces which once they had known so well.

Did Tom know to what he was steering? In after days he never could be quite sure at what precise point a thought turned into a hope.

He sent his invitation beforehand to Mrs. Sinclair and her daughter, and they had many debates over it in the wide old attics which had grown a dear home to them. They had prospered so far that they had ventured to take another room, and Olive had grown used to her unremitting toil, and so accustomed to her constant cares and economies, that she could find interest and excitement in the fluctuations of her earnings. There had been no further encroachment on the little fund realized by her father's life insurance, and Olive was even accumulating tiny savings of her own, made on the sound and sure plan of settling her maximum expenditure by her minimum earnings. Very tiny savings indeed they were, savings which would little avail against disaster if it fairly came, but which might go very far to avert disaster. They would not have supported her in a long illness, but wisely laid out, from time to time, they might do much to preserve health. Olive began to think, hopefully, that however long she might live, and however little she might be able to save, she might continue so useful to the last that she might eat the bread of independence to the end. Only she must be quite sure to outlive her dear mother. Every night and morning she offered that one prayer. Every thing else she could cover with the great petition, "Thy will be done;" but she could not quite give up this special plea.

"And this is only because God's will is not done!" she said to herself. "For if it was, I could surely feel that I might safely leave dear mother to her only son, not only to his support, but to the tenderness of his love and the warmth of his hearth."

When Tom Ollison's invitation came, Olive went to her little store

and counted it over, and made many minute calculations. She made up her mind that she and her mother could dare to afford this treat. Under no circumstances could they get so much pleasure at so low a price. This would cost nothing but their fares in the boat—they would need to make no preparations to enjoy the bountiful hospitality of Clegga. Not that she could bear to go quite empty-handed among the poor old wives and fatherless children who had once been her parent's pensioners; but if she sat up through only one night, her busy fingers would manufacture little gifts without cost of money or of working hours. Yes, they would go!

Mrs. Sinclair heard her daughter's determination a little wistfully. She had hoped for an invitation to visit her son after his marriage and she had made up her mind that if one came, why even that sacred "insurance money" must be taken that it might be accepted. It would not be robbing Olive; no, no, once Robert saw his mother, he would be sure to make it up to her; it was not the money that he would grudge, it was only that he didn't realize quite how things were!

She was right that it was not the money he grudged in this matter. He would have paid the cost of the journey many times over, so long as she did not take it. (On the same principle or rather no-principle he would probably have liberally aided any impecunious relatives who had known how to thrust their poverty on him at inconvenient times.) Poor little lady, with her worn black dress, and the patient pain in her beautiful eyes, what a discord her appearance would have struck in his gairish, rapid life! "Mother is happiest where she is," he said to himself. And there was not only heartlessness in the reflection, it ended in a sigh. He felt there was something about him and his wife and his home which would trouble Mrs. Sinclair. "Mother would not understand," he said, and sighed again.

So once more the two women went down to the dock and met Tom, and this time they went on board with him. The young, strong man and the high-spirited maiden were very tender and watchful over the little mother. They said aside that this going back would try her a little, and they wondered, in their inexperience, to notice that while her tears would start fast and faster, her smiles also grew brighter, and she became quite eager in her recognition of points and places which stirred old memories.

They had a happy time in dear old Clegga. And in the long quiet walks which Tom and Olive took together along the roads which waved up and down the low, green hills looking down on the wide blue sea, they opened their hearts and spoke to each other, as hitherto each had only silently thought. And if, as that pleasant sojourn drew to a close, there came long silences in those walks, it was not because they had nothing more to say, but because there was so much to say, which they felt they could trust to each other's thoughts, almost better than to any words.

Olive Sinclair owned to herself this much—that whether Tom Ollison had loved her or not, she might easily have loved him, only that she knew such feelings were not for her. She would never leave her mother. Well, she had her mother to love and to work for, and what would life be without that?

And Tom Ollison asked himself whether it did not seem very hard that Peter Sandison should be left in loneliness at last—a loneliness haunted by memories of deprivation and wrong. A very different loneliness from that of his own father, with his wholesome memories, his large local influence, and the cheerful coming to and fro of his prosperous married children. Tom did not feel as if the seed of one's own happiness must be planted in the pain of others, and watered by their tears.

But Tom had the masculine right of action and enterprise. Where Olive must have silently taken up what she felt to be her duty, he could seek to elicit her opinion on such matters, and could lead her on from generalities to their own particular cases.

And so it came to pass that the first breathings of the great love of life between those two, were mingled with tender thoughts of others, and careful consideration concerning them. It came to them as the corner-stone placed solemnly on the edifice of affection and duty—not as the missile of a battering-ram rudely hurled against it. They could measure what it must be by knowing how much these were, and by finding this supreme above them!

And Mrs. Sinclair, with the keen vision of one who had been through these experiences, foresaw what was coming, and so sitting alone on the bench outside Clegga, overlooking the sunny bay, she strove to brace her heart for this sacrifice, and to win strength to say that if it was to be well with her child, then it should be well with her. Yet at the thought of the vanishing of the days of quiet love and labor in which her wrung heart had found all the rest it could ever find in this world, she could scarcely repress the last cry of patient anguish, "How long, O Lord, how long!"

And while Mrs. Sinclair sat thus, Tom and Olive strolled slowly down the road where she and Robert had traveled on the wild December morning when our story commenced, but which was now rich with wild flowers, bright in the summer sunshine. And Tom said to Olive that he would never have dared to ask her to love him, if he had meant such love to disturb the sacred duties already in her life—that he thought the love of life should mean two gladly bearing together the double duty that had been divided between them. And then they said to each other that they could not at once very clearly see how their future was to work itself out, but that surely their love would be strong enough to grapple with all details, and not a sickly sentiment on which no cross wind must blow, lest it slay it altogether. And they said, too, that their duty was owed to good people, who were not likely now to prove themselves inconsiderate and selfish for the first time in their lives; though of course they must expect to find them human with all the little human moods and weaknesses, which, after all, seem but a cement to bind together human virtues. And Tom said to Olive that he thought those must have a very poor idea of all that is involved in twain being made one, who feel that such unity is endangered if not nursed in solitude; and that he thought there is little fear of any household, however constituted, not falling in the main into right relations around any married pair who love, honor, and respect each other. And then Olive said softly, that Isaiah had made it one of the signs of national prosperity that "old men and old women should dwell

in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for every age." Then they had come nearer to particulars, and Tom said that he feared Mrs. Sinclair might shrink from life in London, and Olive answered that she was sure her mother would be happy anywhere with those she loved. And then they said how, in London, she would not be far from Stockley, and might, perhaps, have a double home if she wished. And then they fell to still homelier discussions of ways and means, which even a listening angel might have almost envied, because of the divine alchemy with which their human hands could transmute filthy lucre into pure love.

That night Tom Ollison told Mrs. Sinclair that he would never take her daughter from her, but that Olive had well-nigh promised in her mother's name that he should be accepted by her as a son. And Mrs. Sinclair put her hands on his shoulders and drew down his face and kissed him with the fond motherly kiss which he had not known for years. And she longed to ask him and Olive to forgive her for the doubt and pain she had felt that afternoon, but she kept silence because she thought it would hurt them even to hear of it. And then she went away and wept a little, because she had never seen her Robert's wife, and because she could not help believing that her own son would feign be as kind and good as Tom, but had somehow failed to seem so!

EPILOGUE.

AFTER all, Tom Ollison and Olive Sinclair were married sooner than they had dared to hope on that summer day when they had stood hand-in-hand among the wild flowers on the road over the cliffs. Life's path broadened before their feet, as it ever does before the true heart and the resolute will.

And now they lived in the old house in Penman's Row, and Olive has brightened the shady rooms with the pretty tastes and fancies which love and happiness have developed in her, as the warmth of spring brings out the crocuses and snowdrops. As Tom sits at the head of the table in the dining-room (for Mr. Sandison has said that he is only too delighted to abdicate the post of carver and sit aside at leisure to criticise his successor), Tom wonders if it can be the same dreary room into which he was ushered on his first arrival in London, for everything seems different except the quaint mirrors and the comfortable cat, who has exchanged the old coat on which he then lay for a soft red cushion. The upper rooms are Olive's more especial domain; but more and more often, as she sits in the twilight playing on the piano and crooning old songs, Peter Sandison steals upstairs and sits listening in the shadows. Mrs. Sinclair found the gloom and excitement of London life rather too much for her at first, and made long visits to her old friends the Blacks at Stockley; but as time passed on she seemed able to store up the cheerfulness and calm she gathered there, and to bring them back with her, along with the big nosegays and stuffed hampers which Mrs. Black never failed to send. By her own choice her special apartment was the wide, low attic which had formerly been Tom's room; and her son-in-law gave her an exquisite surprise by bringing her familiar household gods from the far North to furnish it. Better

"goods" could have been bought near at hand for less than the cost of the transit of the old chests and clumsy chairs, but he wanted to give her "a gift," and she seemed already to live so wholly in the spirit, that one need give her naught but what also had its value wholly in the spirit, consecrated by tender emotion, by memory, and by hope.

It was hard to find the point of view from which Robert and Etta Brander regarded the new arrangements in Penman's Row. They came there once or twice: but the West End of London is very far away from its other quarters, and a lady who, like Etta, never travels except in her own brougham, and is very fearful of its panels being scratched, cannot venture often into the city. Besides, Etta's constitution is steadily growing less adapted to London, except during the few weeks of "the season." She is always trying the climate of some new watering-place, or the effects of some fashionable "cure" for those vague maladies which occupy those who have nothing else to do. Robert has his fine house very much to himself, and though it is not very far from Ormolu Square, he does not see much of his wife's parents, he and Mr. Brander having separated their business interests. The younger man considered that the elder was getting "slow" and subsiding into grooves, where he himself would never have made the fortune he had made, and with which, therefore, Robert was not going to be content. The wheel of life goes fast with Robert Sinclair, and his face has a wan, hunted look, not like those who live by hardest daily labor, but more like that of the needy adventurers who hang on the very outskirts of honesty. He is rich and likely to be richer, though none know so well as himself what sharp corners he still turns sometimes, and how near ruin may be after all. Sometimes he asks querulously, "If life is worth the living?" But it has never yet dawned on him that perhaps he has made a bad bargain, and that love, and friendship, and duty, high thoughts, and pleasant household ways and holy aspirations, are what do make life worth living, and that these are in the forfeit when we will "get on"—"at any cost."

Tom and Olive know well that the son whom she sees so seldom is in the mother's heart when she goes away and sits for hours in the quiet attic, where no sound penetrates save Kirsty Mail's gentle footfall as she goes to and fro in the chamber where Grace Allen still lies, cut off from speech and hearing, but with a pleading look softening her hard eyes, and a habit of kindly clasping bending her stiff fingers. Tom and Olive are so happy together that they do not resent the shadows of sin and sorrow amid which they carry sunshine, and their home is not less sacred to them because they often say to each other that it seems to be a miniature copy of the workings of God's providence in its widest ranges, and that while they twain represent its active life and its material progress, its very existence is rooted in the martyred life of Him who, taking nothing for His own, bore all and forgave all; and in the loving heart of her who is still waiting for the return of that prodigal son of modern life, who has mistaken gold for food, success for satisfaction, and worldly power for the peace which passeth understanding.

THE END.

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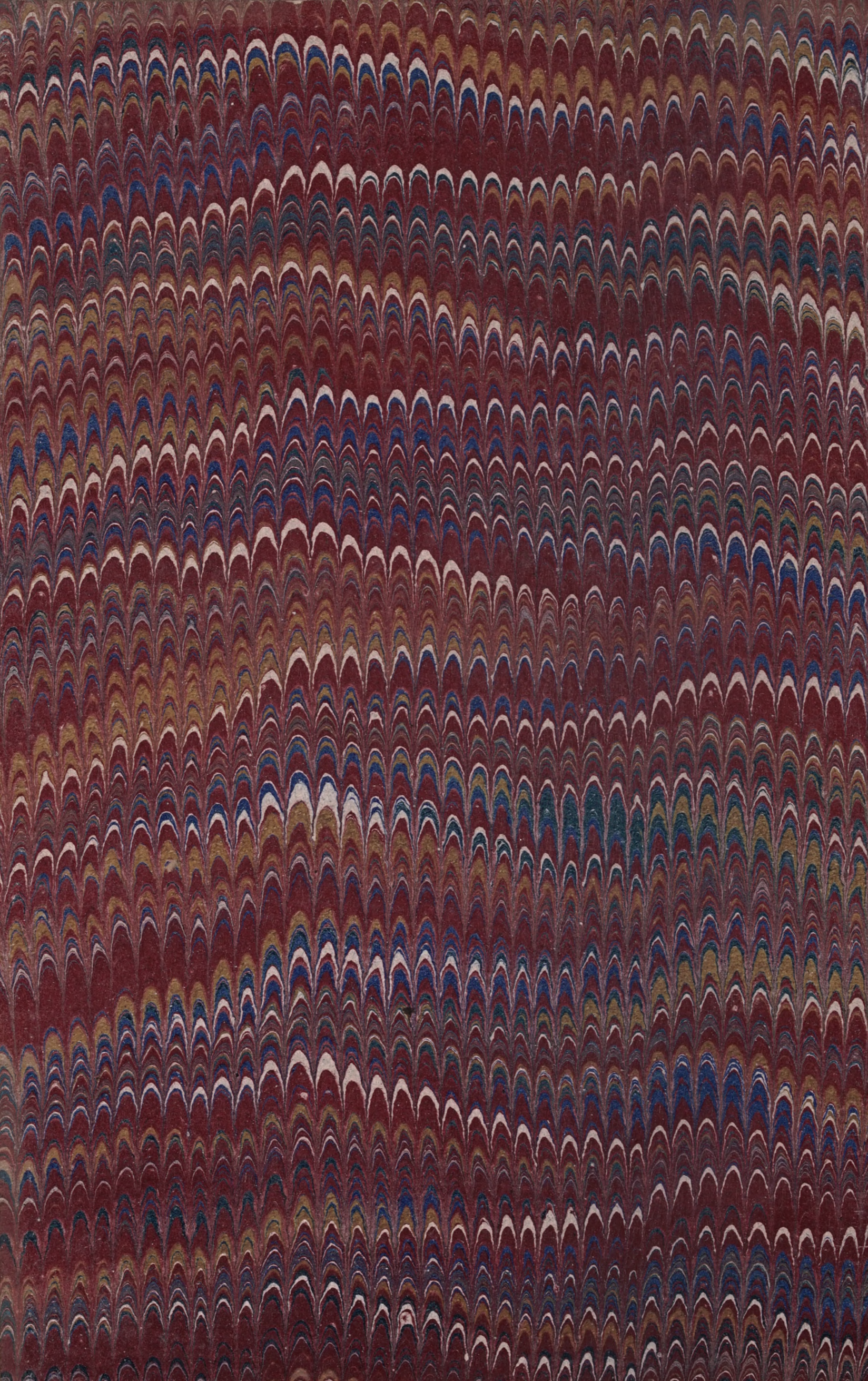
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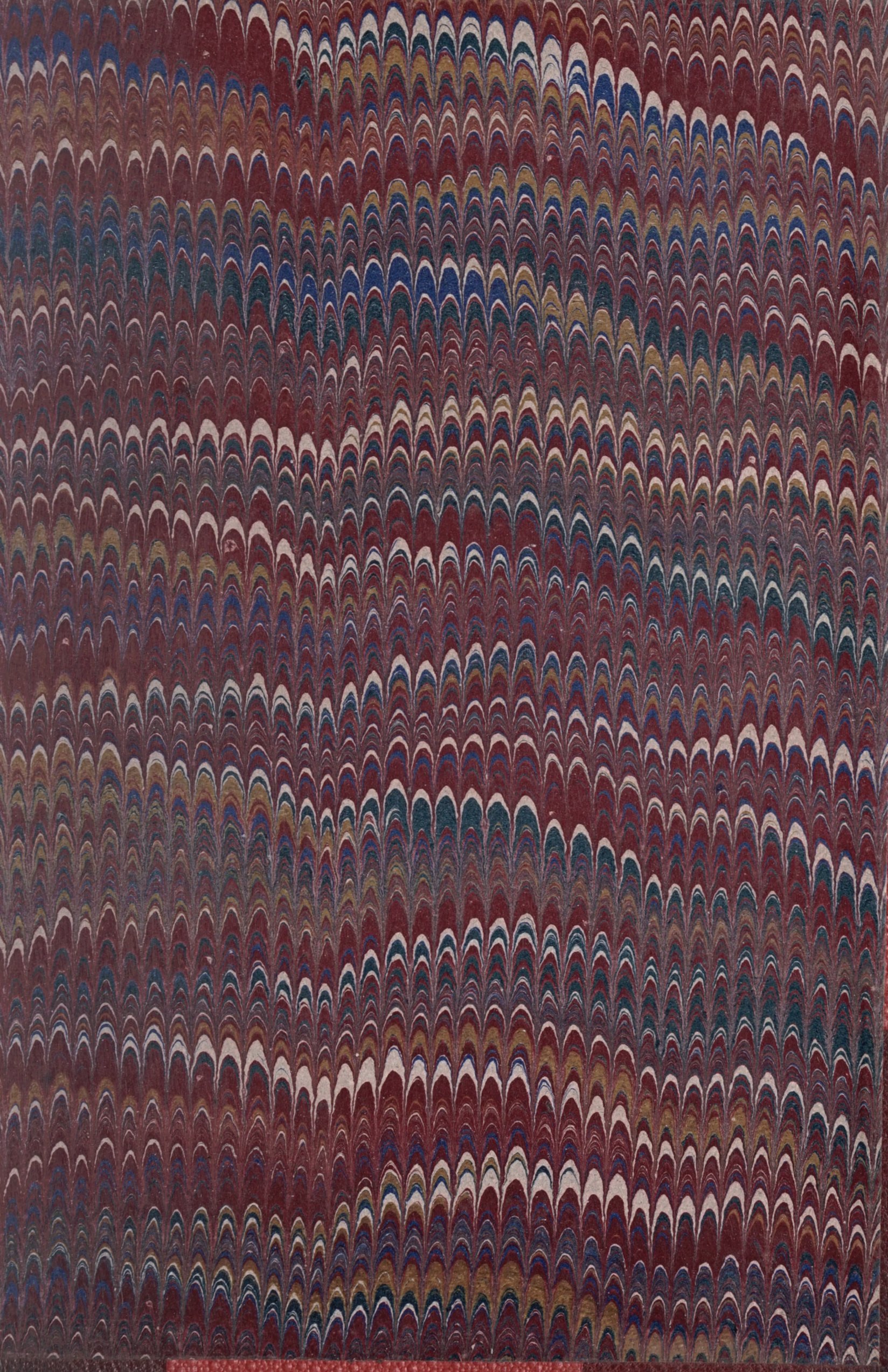
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